

BANDWAGON

The Journal of the Circus Historical Society

March-April 1996



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THIS MONTH'S COVER

The Adam Forepaugh & Sells Bros. Great Combined Shows parade lithograph on this issue's cover was produced by the Strobbridge company for the 1896 season. A number of 1896 Forepaugh-Sells posters used the same title design. The original is in the Pfening Archives.

The Orin King installment in this issue is about the Kansas tour of the Forepaugh-Sells circus in 1896.

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NEW DIRECTORY AVAILABLE

A new 1996 directory of Circus Historical Society members is now available. Active CHS members can receive a copy by sending \$1 for postage to Bandwagon, 2515 Dorset Rd. Columbus, Ohio 43221.

1996 CHS CONVENTION

The 1996 CHS convention has already drawn a number of registrations. Additional information appears on page XX of this issue.

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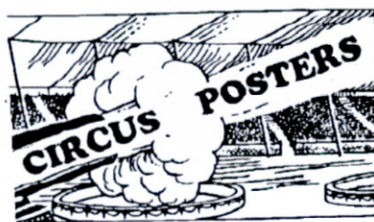
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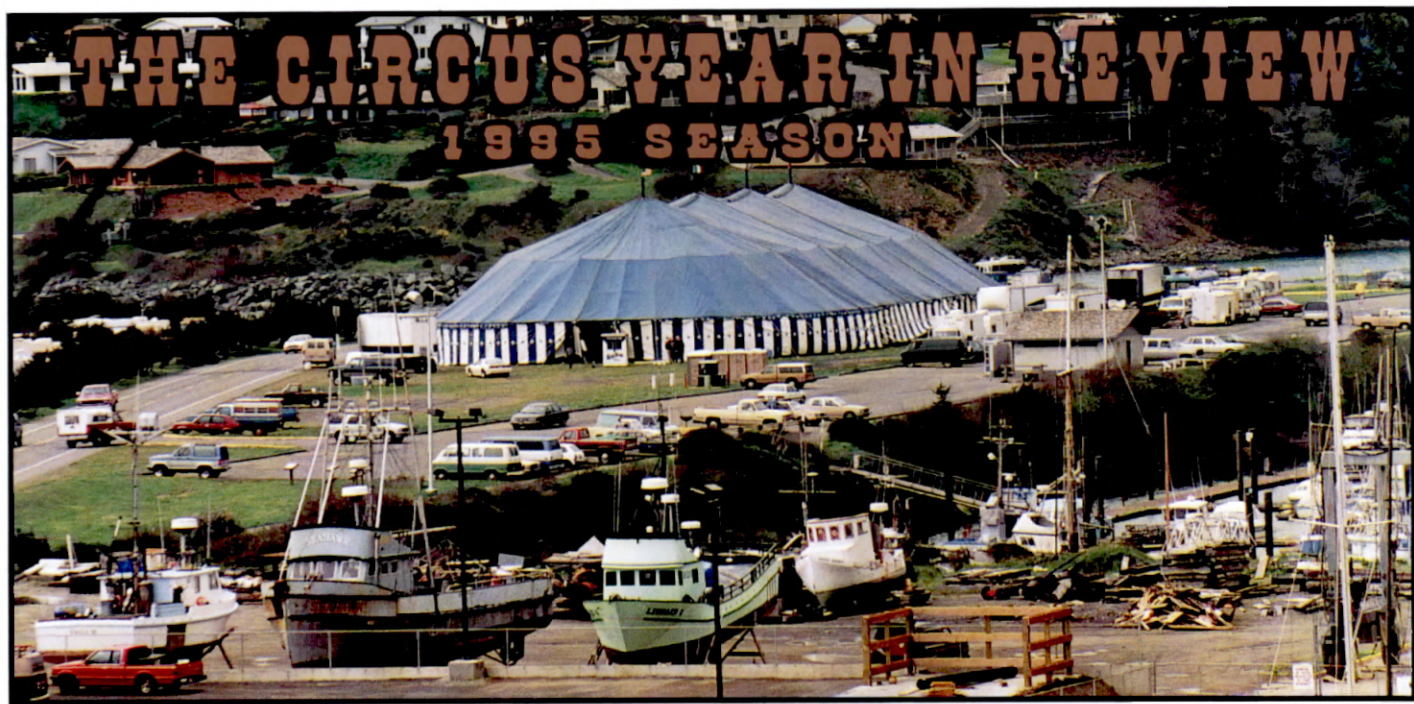
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BY FRED D. PFENING III

Business was good overall as a strong economy bolstered shows' box offices. Most circuses came home winners, although a few struggled, and one closed. While the season had its share of dramatic moments, the sudden death of a show owner for example, there were no cataclysmic incidents on the scale of the previous year. The Cirque du Soleilization of the performance accelerated as more and more shows incorporated concepts pioneered by the Canadian behemoth into their programs. More outfits than ever utilized modernistic wardrobe, new lighting and sound systems, and, most importantly, imposed a cohesive theme to parts or all of their programs. Some small concerns took new wave ideas to their extreme with the result being circuses themed around left-wing politics or even insects. This wasn't your father's Oldsmobile.

The unending war with animal rights activists intensified. The circus took a hit when Georgia banned elephant rides, a move which terminated a major revenue source. Further, two Massachusetts towns outlawed the exhibition of wild animals. In spite of actress Kim Basinger's testimony to prohibit exotic animals on shows, a New Hampshire measure died in committee. When two elephants caused a bit of damage on two occasions, the incidents were overblown in the Eastern media which was typically unsympathetic to the circus's point of view and displayed its customary dis-

regard for accuracy. Letters to the editor columns were full of epistles from animal rightists complaining about animal abuse on circuses. Picketing on the lot or arena, the old standby, was much in evidence.

Some of the rightists' new strategies were insidious attempts to scare off sponsors or patrons. People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA), one of the most radical groups, informed Shrine Temple Potentates of the huge potential liability to which they were exposing themselves by engaging elephant acts. Animal rights organizations apprised towns and sponsors of alleged animal abuse by circuses in their area. A group in Washington state pasted "Canceled" signs over at least one troupe's posters and date sheets. A year end report noted that activists planned to infiltrate circuses to make charges to regulatory bodies about their handling of animals.

Tented and otherwise, the outdoor branch of the business, while not the overwhelmingly popular format of the past, was still a highly visible and viable means of exhibition. With a few notable exceptions, the tenters prowled small towns and suburbs as indoor circuses generally catered to urbanites. The big top retained its hold on America's imagination, so much so that tents and circuses were linked in the public mind even though most people had not seen a performance under canvas in years. Most shows in this genre were of mid-size with moderate nuts, working

Reid Bros. Circus on a lot near the ocean in Brookings, Oregon on April 6. Jerry Cash photo.

under the auspices of local service clubs. Gone for the most part were the "lot and license" days when the show played a town without the support of a local group.

Cirque du Soleil, the new wave marvel from Montreal, continued to stretch the boundaries of what went on inside the ring, exerting a major influence on other shows. The North America touring troupe rocked sophisticated big city audiences. Additionally, its award-winning production at the Treasure Island Casino in Las Vegas had the third highest patronage of any circus on the continent, only Ringling-Barnum's two units sold more tickets. Further, the European enterprise played the old world for nine months.

A Yuppie circus to its glow-in-the-dark toes, the company attracted a demographic group--affluent urban professionals--which shunned more traditional shows. Playing metropolitan areas for about a month each, the under-canvas unit appeared in such megalopolises as New York, Chicago, Boston, Washington, and Atlanta. In its second year, the production, called "Alegria," was dark and foreboding, almost other worldly, as opposed to virtually all other shows which were in some manner life affirming. Full of ominous pretensionous and dripping artiness out of every pore, it was the kind of circus Rod Sterling and Andy Warhol would have conceived had they ever collaborated.



Cirque du Soleil tent at Battery Park in Manhattan in June. J. Kurt Spence photo.

It was, however, overflowing with remarkable choreography, bizarre costumes, state-of-the-art lighting, and new age music. While the overall production consumed the individual acts, some of the performers shone such as the Flying Lev on the trapeze and strong man Rick Zumwalt.

"Mystere," the second unit, continued to entrance crowds in a 1541 seat theater at the Treasure Island Casino in Las Vegas. This Ottoman Empire of a circus, on the scale of the biggest Broadway and Vegas shows, was without doubt the most enormous arenic endeavor in the continent's history. Using revolving and descending floors, banks of smoke, and futuristic lighting and sound, the theme was "an apocalyptic view of life, creation, and the mystery of the universe," all of which seemed like a tight fit for two hours. Everything was oversize; it was a circus on steroids. The intensity of the performance had an overpowering, almost monstrous, feel to it which in

Big Apple Circus at Detroit, Michigan in June. Fred Pfening, Jr. photo.



places looked all the world like some ancient Druid ritual. Among the acts were a Russian flying return routine, and an innovative bungee cord trapeze turn. The \$57.50 ticket was the highest general admission ever charged to a circus in this country.

Beneath a new white big top, "Saltimbanco," the European production, opened in March in Amsterdam, then made its way to Munich, Berlin, Dusseldorf, and Vienna to complete the year. Soleil was chosen to help stage the opening ceremonies of the 1996 Atlanta Olympics, a decision that evoked criticism from quarters that believed an American circus, Ringling-Barnum for example, should have been selected. In October, the company entered into a contract with a Montreal television production company to shoot thirteen episodes of a dramatic series revolving



around the show. President Clinton and his wife and daughter attended a performance of "Algeria" near Washington in November. It was the first time in years that the sitting President had been in a circus audience.

The Big Apple Circus, the Rolls-Royce of the arenic world, started the year by pitching its single ring tent in Queens in March before moving on to a month-long engagement in Boston. Other New York City dates followed before a long jump to Detroit. Four New England towns concluded the spring-summer tour with the last coming at Shelburne, Vermont on July 30. The fall-winter season began in late September near Washington, followed by

the great, grand run at Lincoln Center in the heart of Manhattan from October 17 to January 9. The troupe's high production values and first class ambiance attracted patrons more likely to attend a Broadway show than a circus.

The spring-summer production was a reprise of the 1994 winter offering Entitled "Grandma Meets Mummenshanz," it featured costumes of Swiss design which transformed performers into amorphous blobs, slinkies and disembodied hands. The performance marked the triumphant return of Barry Lubin, aka Grandma the clown, to the troupe. Other displays included Elena Panova on the single trapeze, Katja Schumann and her father Max in a Mexican-themed liberty horse act, Lisa Dufresne with pigs and a herd of ducks, the Egorov troupe in a casting act, and Ben and Darlene Williams and their two daughters with the elephants. This engagement was likely the swan song for Benny Williams, one of the most dynamic and charismatic performers of this century.

"Jazzmatazz," the new extravaganza, was a salute to the 1920s. It

Giant big top of the Carson and Barnes Circus at Riverside, California on April 29. Jerry Cash photo.

maintained the demanding standards of previous editions as the lighting, pacing, music, costumes, and mix of acts were all of the highest magnitude. In-ring personnel included Katja, Max and Katherine Schumann in a riding routine, the Rizhkov trio on the trapeze, juggler Kris Kremko, hula hooper Elena Egorova, Masha Dimitri on the slack wire, the Egorov troupe on the Russian barre, and William Woodcock with the elephants. When clown Barry Lubin appeared in a ventriloquist skit sans his Grandma make up, it was his first time in the Big Apple ring out of his famous persona. Founder Paul Binder was ringmaster. Linda Hudes, the Sousa of the circus, composed an engaging score for Ric Albani's band.

The Carson and Barnes Circus, that glorious throwback to the great railroad shows of the 1930s and 1940s, opened in Paris, Texas in mid-March.

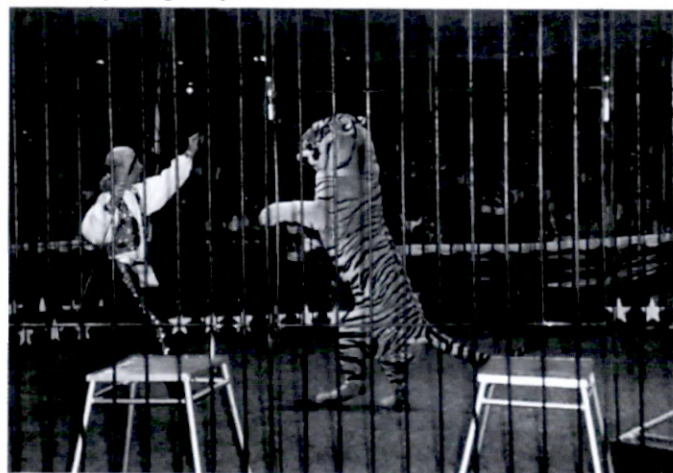


Teddie II, a three year old giraffe with Carson and Barnes, was one of only two on circuses. Jerry Cash photo.

Heading west, the show reached California in mid-April and stayed in the Golden State for almost two months before going north to the Pacific Northwest and the Big Sky states. Entering Kansas in late August, the company played the Plains and Southern states, going as far east as Mississippi, before closing up shop in Oklahoma on November 5. The season was financially very good.

Although the troupe played more multi-day engagements than in recent years, this marvelous anachronism was still the last of the giant one-night stand aggregations. The 41 show-owned vehicles covered a hair over 13,500 miles of highway in sixteen states during the tour with the jumps averaging 65 miles a day, the longest being 214 miles. The menagerie was about the size of Noah's with a giraffe, hippo, white rhino, five camels, seventeen elephants (with a dozen more at the company's breeding facility or leased to other circuses), miscell-

Khri Allen putting a tiger through its paces on Beatty Cole at the March 13 Deland opening. Ray Gronso photo.



aneous lead stock, four tigers, a lion, two ligers, and lots of horses, ponies and reptiles.

The show deviated from its high grass roots by importing a number of performers from the People's Republic of China; the show's theme was called the "Opulent Elegance of the Orient." The actors, called the Super Dragon Troupe, displayed typical Chinese fare such as hand balancing, contortion, perch pole, juggling, plate spinning, acrobatics and teeter board. Occidental performers included John Thomas Frazier with the cats, Cindi Cavallini with the Friesian stallions at liberty, the Loyal-Repensky riders, Donnie Carr with the elephants, the Flying Falcons and the Flying Picolos. John Moss was the ringmaster and the music, alas, was taped.

It was a busy year off the lot. The company garnered national publicity in early February when Shanuna, a two year old tiger recently purchased from John Cuneo, escaped from her cage at the Hugo, Oklahoma winter quarters. On the lam for ten days, she was finally captured after being spotted by a National Guard helicopter's heat sensor. Rumors swirled around the industry for much of the year that D. R. Miller, the Carson and Barnes patriarch, was buying the George Carden Circus. After much negotiation, the deal fell through. Bucky Steele's elephants were purchased in the spring. In November, it was announced that the organization would put out a second unit in 1996 called the Imperial Chinese Circus. Equipment from Allan Hill's Great American Circus was purchased to frame it.

The Clyde Beatty and Cole Bros. Circus, the other big three ring tent, left its Deland, Florida winter lair in mid-March to make its usual trek up and down the East Coast before calling it a day in late November. In all, the 27 show-owned semis covered a bit over 10,000 miles in 17 states. The company received some unwanted publicity dur-

ing the summer when the elephants Frieda and Debbie became frisky in Hanover, Pennsylvania and again in Queens, New York, where seven people were slightly injured. The bulls were shortly thereafter exiled to John Cuneo's. The incidents shook up some Long Island towns on the route which contemplated not allowing the circus to exhibit the remaining elephants when playing their cities. The season was a winner at the box office, but not great.

The company used a 150 foot by 300 foot big top. Under it appeared Khri Allen with the cage act, Margarita Michelle Ayala in a hair hang, Gloria and Dawnita Bale with liberty horses and later dressage, a Bulgarian tumbling act, the Dielkas sisters on rolling globes, the Quiros high wire act, the Flying Rodriguez, Dolly Bale with a pig and dog act, Fred Logan with the elephants, the Petrov troupe on the Russian swing, and Sean Thomas as the human cannonball. Jimmy James was ringmaster and James Haverstrom led the band.

John Pugh became sole owner of the company in March when he bought out partner Doug Holwadel's 49% interest. The deal ended a productive thirteen year adventure that started when the two bought the moribund circus from Florida State University. The death of long-time executive Harry Hammond only two weeks after the opening was a tragic blow. The organization's elephants were in the January 1 Orange Bowl parade and helped provide entertainment at the football game that evening, all amid a huge outcry from animal rights activists. The two day stand at Pascagoula, Mississippi in early October was lost to Hurricane Opal as the show took refuge at the Hattiesburg, Mississippi fairgrounds. Veteran Fred Logan's picture was published in the tony *New Yorker* magazine, a singular honor.

Circus Vargas was almost exclusively a California affair, apparently leaving the state only to appear in Las Vegas during its March to November schedule. The midway had a ticket wagon, moon bounce, snake show, pony sweep, souvenir stand and concession trailer. Owners Roland Kaiser and Joe Muscarello dropped their one year policy of not using animals in the performance as Kay Rosaire with her cats, and Timi Loyal and Caroline Williams in their riding act were new features. Other acts earning their living under the one ring top included clown Manny Valdo, the Bantu Warriors in their dance and acrobatic routine, the juggling Fudis, John and Tina Dubsky

with their dogs, and Max Bizzaro in an aerial act. While the return of the animals was generally well received by the public, the season was not a stellar one.

King Royal Circus had a long season, opening in Texas in February and tromping mainly through that state, the Midwest and the South until early December. One report had the company putting out a Christmas unit at year's end. Always strong on animals, the aggregation carried a giraffe and used two elephants on the advance for publicity. Under a new big top that arrived during the tour appeared juggler Pat Davison, Caesar Osoria with Dory the elephant, Dutch Crawford with four liberty llamas and later zebras, the Loter sisters in an aerial cradle routine, Amanda Curiel on the low wire, Claudette Curiel on Roman rings, and clown Walt Stimax. Owner John "Gopher" Davenport worked the cat act.

After opening in its home town of Hugo, Oklahoma, the Al G. Kelly and Miller Bros. Circus marched through

erty horses, the Olivares in the wheel of destiny, and the Perez family on the high wire and the flying trapeze. Brett Hood was the ringmaster, and the music was taped for the first time. Kelly-Miller was a family affair as owner David Rawls' brother Bill was show manager, and father Harry, coming out of retirement, was side show manager.

Allen Bros. Circus came out of hibernation in March. After perambulating through Texas, the South, the Midwest and the East, it returned to its La Feria, Texas home in early November. The one ringer moved on a dozen straight bed trucks; no semis were used. A pony sweep, moon bounce, petting zoo, and combination concession-ticket trailer filled the front end. The ninety minute performance took place



The King Royal Circus ticket wagon in West Liberty, Ohio in August. Fred Pfening, Jr. photo.

in date in Scottsdale, Arizona. The company also taught circus skills during a month long residency in a Native American community near Scottsdale. The troupe's performance theme continued the saga of the Baldini family, a fictional circus clan. "The Legend of the Phoenix," this year's offering, was set in a vaudeville theater at the turn of the twentieth century. At Houston, it featured clown Larry Pisoni, the Flying Wallendas on the high wire, Maggie Suarez on the trapeze, the Suarez family in a bareback riding routine, the Dancing Gauchos, the acrobatic St. Louis Arches, and a double cloud swing by Sacha Pavlata and Aureilia Wallenda.

Franzen Bros. Circus had an early-year trek through Florida, going as far south as Key West before starting the regular season in mid-April in Georgia. Progressing up the East Coast the troupe fulfilled contracts in the East and Midwest throughout the summer before heading back to its winter quarters in the sunshine state. Owner

Midway of the Kelly-Miller Circus. Side show is on right. Sheelagh Jones photo.



Office wagon and concession trailer of the Franzen Bros. Circus at Everglades City, Florida on January 10. Joe Bradbury photo.

the South through May. Midwestern and Mid-Atlantic dates followed before spending August in Ontario. Midwestern and Plains states engagements were next before reaching trail's end in Oklahoma in late October. Moving on thirteen show-owned rigs and about a dozen private motor homes and trailers, the show covered 9293 miles in sixteen states and one province. This one didn't have a great year as business in Canada was weak.

The performance, in one ring for the first time, was under a new Scola Teloni push pole tent. Other new equipment included a 150kw generator and a lighting and fog system. Among the performers were the Cassidays on perch pole, Myrna Silverlake with dogs, Roy Wells with the elephants, the Jenzac brothers in knockabout comedy, Cindy Herriott Wells with lib-

under a 90 by 120 push pole top seating 1000. Sawdust stars included the Lunas on the flying trapeze and the Russian swing, Ron Dykes on the slack wire, the Fossio family in a living statue routine and on a perch pole, and Larry Grant with the cats and the elephant. Veteran Phil Chandler was ringmaster, and the music was recorded. Earlynn Bedford, wife of owner Allen Bedford, worked the cage act during part of the season.

Circus Flora, the new waver founded by David Balding, debuted in its home town of St. Louis in April and May at two different locations. Engagements in Charleston, South Carolina and Houston followed before going back in the barn after a date



Wayne Franzen, the poor man's Gunther Gebel-Williams, worked an astonishing number of animal acts including tigers, a liberty llama and dromedary, a three elephant act, a pick-out horse routine, and eight liberty horses. Unique among his brethren, he was a throwback to the early days of the American circus when the proprietor and the star performer were one and the same. Other actors included Natalie and Michelle Dionne on rola bolas, and Natalie Dionne on a single trapeze. Wayne Gales, a veterinarian, joined the company in late June as the announcer. This troupe mailed announcements telling circus fans that the show was coming to their area, a marketing technique used by other traveling companies.

Roberts Bros., headed by Doris Earl and her family, sojourned in the South and East from late March until mid-October, going all the way up to Maine. In all, the company traversed about 12,000 miles in sixteen states. The midway was typical with a moon bounce, elephant ride, pony sweep, concession stand, snake show, and novelty stand. Among the three rings of talent were Shirley Earl on single trapeze, Jeff Earl with liberty horses and later with magic, Yvonne Stephens and Christine Schreiber with llamas, Daniel and Chris Schreiber on rolling globes, and Ken Benson with Lisa the elephant and in a whip cracking and rope spinning exhibition. Bill Schreiber was the ringmaster and Rod Wainwright provided the mirth.

Walker Bros. Circus traipsed around the South and Midwest for 42 weeks. The roster included Tanya Herrmann with a January mule named Nebraska, a foot juggling routine, and pad riding; Bobby and Lauren Fairchild with a knife and hatchet display; and owner John Walker with the company's two elephants. Pam and Roger

Culpepper and Merriweather Circus on the lot in Ontario, California on April 24. Ticket wagon on right. Jerry Cash photo.



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Newspaper ad for Walker Bros. Circus for Baraboo, Wisconsin on August 1. The free children's ticket was widely used marketing device.

Zoppe had their monkeys on the troupe for at least part of the season, and Bill Brickle worked dogs when he wasn't ringmastering. On May 25 in Doanville, Ohio a truck pulling the office-ticket trailer plunged off a bridge. The driver and a passenger were taken to a local hospital. A Methodist Church was the sponsor when the troupe appeared in East Troy, Wisconsin in July.

Bentley Bros. Circus, a side-walled affair usually playing grandstands, started its spring season in the West in April, continuing through June. Dates in the Midwest, East and South kept owners Tommy Bentley and Chuck Clancey busy from June until October. The year concluded with a November and December journey in the East and upper South using the title Mark Charles Holiday Revue. In previous years the company had an under-canvas route in Florida at the first of the year;

if they did this in 1995 it went unrecorded in the trade press. The core spring and summer dates were most often sponsored by police and fire fighter groups.

The June 23-25 engagement at the Hamilton County fairgrounds near Cincinnati was typical. Appearing under the auspices of the Firemen's Protective Association, the show offered the following displays: Roberto Torres on the slack wire, Robert Moyer with the cats and later camels, Diane Moyer with dogs and later with the elephants (an Asian and two Africans), the Torres brothers in knockabout comedy, George Allen on the single trapeze, the Flying Gaonas, Margarita Michelle Ayala in her famous hair hang, and Dave Smith as the human cannonball. Smith claimed to have set a record for the longest cannon shot at Manville, New Jersey on August 13 when he went a bit over 180 feet during a Bentley performance. The previous record was 175 feet by one of the Zachinis in 1940.

The Culpepper and Merriweather Circus romped through the West from March until October. New additions included an elephant purchased from Frank Thompson and a 120 foot by 80 foot tent which sat 900. Under the pavilion performed Rebecca Ostroff on Roman rings, Oren Luke on the high wire, the Kiss family in hand balancing, Ken Taylor in an upside down walk, Casey Cainan with Barbara the elephant, Heidi Wendany with her dressage horse Excalibur, and clown Kevin Ryan. Dean Girard was the announcer.

The program had something of a plot line as Curtis Cainan appeared in several acts trying unsuccessfully to get a job. The concept, the idea of owner Robert "Red" Johnson, was one of the first times a high grass show had incorporated elements of new wave

Alain Zerbini Circus on a good day in Harrison, New Jersey during the summer. Paul C. Gutheil photo.

circuses into its production. It was a so-so year; while the gross was up 10%, the net was not, as increased costs ate into profits.

The Alain Zerbinì Circus rambled around the East from mid-May until mid-September. Before he left the show in late July, the busy Bela Tabak worked trained peacocks, a pony and llama drill, snakes, and a big and little horse. Other actors included Travis Green who clowned and did magic (an unusual combination), the Geraldos on the high wire, the Felix duo in an aerial cradle routine, and the Waltens family in their hand balancing act. Tinkerbell Waltens was ringmistress and the music was recorded.

Vidbel's Olde Tyme Circus opened shop in Virginia in the spring and closed it in Massachusetts in the fall. In between it played seven other states, all in New England and the mid-Atlantic regions. Owned by Al and Joyce Vidbel, the show's two hour performance was under a one ring big top. Inside it appeared (at least around the opening) Jennifer Vidbel with eight liberty ponies, Susan Vidbel in a cloud swing and later with trained birds, the Bannister family with dogs, magician John Kennedy Kane, Carmen Hall with baboons, Angela Martin on trapeze, and Franklin Murray with his elephants. Billy Martin was ringmaster and Wynn Murrah led the band, one of the few on under-canvas operas.

Reid Bros. Circus, owned by John and Betty Reid, rumbled around the Pacific Northwest, the Mountain states, and the Great Plains in the spring. After a summer hiatus, the route resumed with Texas bookings in September and October. Amazing audiences in the Lone Star state were Larry Allen Dean with tigers, Cathy and Oscar Garcia in an aerial number, Erica Ramirez on the Roman rings, Irvin Hall with baboons and later on his unicycle, Cathy Garcia with dogs, and the Flying Ramirez. John Fugate was ringmaster. The show used taped music, which wasn't unusual for a small tent. Its lack of an elephant act was.

The L. A. Circus toiled in its namesake city and its environs from spring to fall, generally playing weekends in a large range of venues from hospitals to downtown plazas. The company made a comeback after the disastrous 1994 season, finishing the year strong. Usually a side walled, one ring affair, the troupe made its first under-canvas appearance during the year. Among the features were Sammy Walten on the rola bola and in chair balancing, Dave Twomey with dogs, Darlene Williams and Noby Arden on web and bungee cord, foot juggler Chester Cable, jug-



Neatly framed ticket and concession trailer on Hendricks Bros. Circus. Snake ding show on right. Bill Elbirn photo.

gler Dario Vazquez, hula hooper Matt Plendl, clown Toby Rechenmacher, and Gary Johnson with Tai the elephant. The non-profit also had a clown care unit visiting hospitals, and workshops teaching circus skills.

Hendricks Bros. Circus, headed by carnival owner and ride manufacturer Bob Childress, celebrated its second year by motoring through the Carolinas for five weeks from late September until early November. This trick was framed on seven trucks. The midway offered the following: pony ride, elephant ride, snake show, menagerie, novelty trailer, moon bounce, face painting booth, and a concession trailer. Talent earning their pay under the 120 by 80 big top included Ben Davenport with a zebra and camel liberty act, the Hart family on rola bolas, Davenport again with two young African elephants, and Mike Rice with Pulsar the liberty horse. Dick Johnson was the ringmaster and performed illusions.

Circo Vazquez presenting Circo Chino moved north from Mexico to south Texas, playing Tejano territory, the borderland where American and Mexican culture meld. From late October through

Electrical generator trailer of the Circo Vazquez in Texas late in the year. European style big top in back ground. Bobby Gibbs photo.



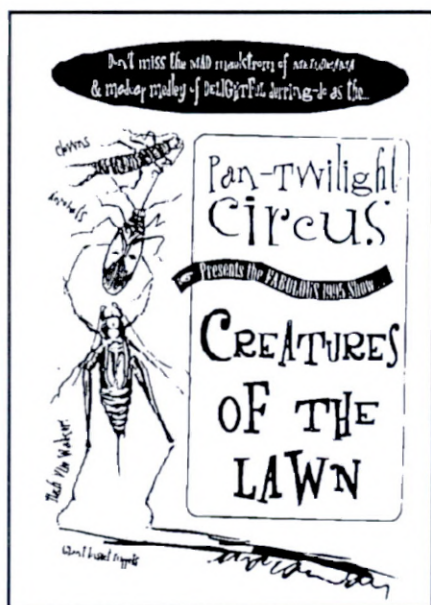
mid-December Mike Clark with his cats, a number of Chinese acts, the Flying Espanas, and Bobby and Rosa Gibbs with the Don Johnson elephants appeared in its 2000 seat big top. Baron von Uhl's Circus appeared at a park near Kenosha, Wisconsin in mid-July, and made one day dates in that state in August. The performance consisted of liberty ponies, a whip act, a cradle routine, juggling, comedy trampoline, and the wild animal act presented by owner Julius von Uhl. The Poopie Valentia and Uhl families put on the entire show.

Circus Jaeger played limited engagements around the Midwest during the summer. Among the arenic displays were Sabrina Herrmann with her high school horse and later in a foot juggling turn, Sasha Slaughtonis with his comedy dog act, Eileen Rosaire and Kasimierz Dymek in a comedy horse routine, Miguel Urizer in a cloud swing act, and Debbie and Emil Goetschi in a whip and rope display. Ringmaster Ray Grins also juggled. Owner Eric Jaeger joined Ringling-Barnum in an executive capacity later in the year, selling his tent and other equipment to Billy Martin.

Phills Bros. Circus hurried in the mid-Atlantic states from May through mid-September. In-ring personnel at the opener included Richard Murillo on the wheel of death, Patti and Carl Reed with a dog and pony revue, juggler Armando Cristiani, the Murillo brothers on the high wire and later on bareback horses, and Patti Reed with

a dressage act. Charlie Van Buskirk was the ringmaster, and Renzo Ticolini provided the mirth. At season's end, owner Bill Phillips gave up the ghost and announced that he was shuttering his eight year old show. The big top and seats were later sold to Circus Smirkus.

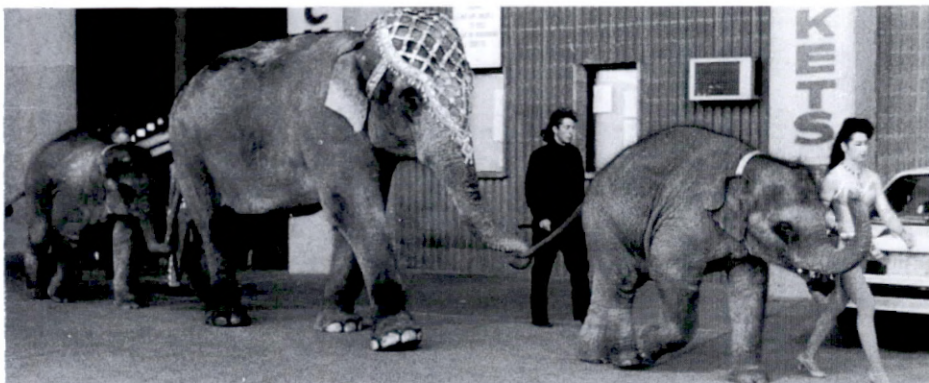
The Circus With a Purpose was the winner of the worst title award. A fund raising vehicle for the North Wind Undersea Institute in the Bronx, it banded around the East in June and later in August and September using an oddly configured tent in which the center pole was in the center of the ring. The performance was a family affair as co-founder Sharon Sandlofter, the daughter of Al and Joyce Vidbel, worked Caesar the leopard in a steel arena, and daughter Sadie rode two Percherons. Michael Sandlofter, the



Program cover for the pride of Rhode Island, the Pan-Twilight Circus.

other co-founder and Sharon's husband, was ringmaster. Circus Amok appeared in New York City parks as an open-air production in June. A self-styled alternative circus funded by state and foundation grants, its theme was the city's budget cuts, linking traditional circus acts with political commentary. For example two women did a number combining ballet and gymnastics called "Adagio with Newt." The company's founder was Jennifer Miller, a bearded lady who ate fire.

In a year rich in preposterous performance themes (see above), the hands down winner for most peculiar was the Pan-Twilight Circus which played three towns in Rhode Island from the end of May to early July. The



two hour show was titled "Creatures of the Lawn," and was about, and we are not making this up, lawn and garden insects. The performers wore costumes resembling various bugs while they juggled, stilt walked, clowned, wire walked, and performed acrobatic and aerial numbers. It was Cirque du Soleil at the Roach Motel. The single ring presentation was backed by a seven piece band under a 300 seat top. Produced by Tom Sgouros, the show was funded by the Rhode Island State Council on the Arts, which should come as no surprise. While the concept seemed nutty, the displays were apparently cleverly done and the artists routinely received standing ovations.

Circuses which sold their product indoors were the largest segment of the industry. These aggregations played virtually everywhere from Madison Square Garden to the local high school gym. These shows, sometimes maligned for not representing "real" circus, had been the mainstay of the business for years and provided more employment than any other variation of sawdust. The indoor area's growth in recent decades was so pronounced that it changed the profession's calendar, making the early months of the year a more active period than the summer months. Without doubt, more people attended performances indoors than out, a commentary on both the changing nature of American society, and the ability of show executives to adjust to new conditions.



Romeo and Juliette being led out of the arena in Cincinnati by Graham Thomas Chipperfield on the Ringling-Barnum Blue show. Bill Rhodes photo.

Always the greatest and grandest, Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey's two units continued to set the standard for the traditional extravaganza while constantly innovating and reinventing themselves. The Red unit, the new troupe, opened on January 2 in Tampa and moved up the East Coast before reaching the promised land of New York City where it appeared at three venues from March 15 to April 30. Other Eastern dates followed before the annual mega-jump from Philadelphia to Tulsa in June. Engagements in Arizona and Nevada were succeeded by a long West Coast stretch. Moving on 52 railroad cars, the company worked its way to the Midwest for the December 3 closing at Chicago's United Center.

The performance had a more surrealistic feel than past editions, a reflection of new artistic director Danny Herman's creativity. The new look was further evidenced in the thematic nature of the program in which four or five acts were linked together in one lengthy production. For example, hula hooper Dessi Espana, the BMX bikers, unicyclist Alexander Chervotkin,

Ringling-Barnum Blue unit train at Louisville. Refrigeration truck on left and tank truck on right. Bill Rhodes photo.

the acrobatic Chicago Kidz, the Espana's globe of death, and the elephant routine were all part of "Grovin' in the Urban Jungle," a high-energy interlude in which one act flowed seamlessly into the next. Other performers included Mark Gebel with liberty horses and camels and later with the elephants, aerialist Jean-Christophe Fournier, clown David Larible, the Flying Pages, Tina Gebel-DelMoral with liberty horses, the Gourianov troupe on the teeter board, and Vivian Larible on the trapeze. Tyrone Taylor started the year working the tigers. After he left in late summer, Gunther Gebel-Williams donned his costume once again to work the act, finishing the season. Gebel-Williams had previously gone in the big cage during the Madison Square Garden run and at a few other stands.

The new lighting system was the most sophisticated ever on a circus. Ringmaster Eric Michael Gillett was named Outstanding Male Vocalist of 1995 by the Manhattan Association of Cabarets and Clubs. The O. J. Simpson jurors attended the July 21 performance under tight security at the Long Beach Arena. The unit had a number of changes in its executive ranks, one of which brought in Eric Jaeger, a former tent show owner, as general manager in August, the first time in decades that the Ringling organization had reached into the under-canvas world for management personnel. Five Philadelphia performances were canceled when the Philadelphia Flyers unexpectedly made the NHL playoffs. Some newspaper ads for the San Francisco date didn't have the show's name in the text, certainly a first.

The Blue unit, in its second go-round, opened in late December 1994 in West Palm Beach. The itinerary took the troupe north, reaching Washington for a long April engagement. Dates in the upper South and Midwest followed before the May 18-June 1 lay off in Oklahoma City. Texas and other southern states consumed June through mid-August. Midwestern and Eastern stands completed the season with the closing at Pittsburgh on November 12.

The performance was similar to the previous year with the baby elephants Romeo and Juliette the headliners. Other acts included Graham Thomas

Chipperfield with the lion act and an elephant-teeter board routine, Johnny Peers with dogs, the Panteleenko in a Russian strap act, the Flying Alvarez and the Flying Vargas, the Boulbekov riders, Jon Weis and James Halliday in a double-barreled human cannonball display, the Mednikov high wire act, and the Boger family with steers and bison. Among the showgirls was Julie Parkinson, daughter of Circus World Museum director Greg Parkinson. Dinny McGuire was ringmaster. Trapezeist Jean-Christophe Fournier moved to the Red unit. Lynbov Chepiakova and Vilorik Kim, who had the horseback riding bear in 1994, did not return; nor did Patricia Zerbini, who had handled Romeo



Ringling-Barnum Clown College, class of 1995 group picture in front of Two Hemisphere bandwagon at Circus World Museum. Clown College Photo.

and Juliette. Elephant boss Bill Woodcock left in March, and Chipperfield took over the herd, making him Ringling-Barnum's youngest elephant department head since Smokey Jones forty years before.

In a publicity coup that would have made Bev Kelley proud, the company put on a mini-performance on the grounds of Washington's Capitol Building on April 5 to commemorate the 125th anniversary of the opening of the Barnum show. Robert Dole and Newt Gingrich were honorary ringmasters. The event made the national news. The scheduled trek into Mexico in May and June was scrubbed; when the peso went south, the show didn't. The troupe was the first circus in Boston's new Fleet Center. The rebuilding of the train continued as the company's Palmetto, Florida Operations Center cranked out restored cars at a furious pace. Before the devastating January 1994 wreck near Lakeland, Florida, the consist had been

53 cars. A number of cars were returned to service in 1994, and by the time the troupe reached Atlanta in February 1995 the total was 46. By closing the number had reached 48. A state-of-the-art electrical generator car was added in Atlanta, certainly the most costly single railroad car ever owned by a circus.

In other Ringling-Barnum news, the organization lost its lawsuit to prohibit the state of Utah for using the slogan, "The Greatest Snow on Earth." A mid-summer issue of *Variety* had a special section on the two units. Clown College yukked it up at Baraboo, Wisconsin's Circus World Museum starting in early August. Instructors included new directors Dick Monday and Rob Mermin, Michael Christensen, Barry Lubin, David Larible, Bill Irwin, Hovey Burgess, and Larry Pisoni, virtually every first-rate funny man in the country. It was undoubtedly the greatest gathering of funsters ever except when Otto Griebling dined alone. The 200 acre elephant breeding farm opened in December with thirty residents near Polk City, Florida. James Williams, a protege of Buckles Woodcock, was the center's manager. Gunther Gebel-Williams was inducted into Madison Square Garden's Walk of Fame while the show was there in March.

Besides the two Ringling-Barnum circuses, the organization also produced a number of ice shows including *The Wizard of Oz on Ice* which opened in September. The company announced early in the year it had been hired to design the entertainment portion of the Wampanoag tribe's new casino in New Bedford, Massachusetts. President-Chief Executive Officer Kenneth Feld was again on the *Forbes* magazine list of the 400 wealthiest Americans. He was also one of the producers of "Fool Moon," a clown show starring Bill Irwin and David Shiner which rocked Broadway from October into the new year. But Can He Use the Name? Department: A report during the summer stated that John Ringling North II, son of Henry Ringling North, planned to open a circus in Dublin, Ireland in 1996 using the title "The Magic of Ringling." Allen Bloom, who had headed marketing since the day Irvin Feld bought Ringling-Barnum, left the company in December, a de-

parture which stunned the industry.

Marc Verreault's Super Cirque played one dayers in Quebec and Ontario hockey rinks from late April until mid-June. This was a fairly good sized show, using two rings and a steel arena. Tanbark talent included Lance Ramos with the cats and later with liberty horses, the Howles in their cradle act, Derrick Rosaire with bears, Gary Sladek on the trampoline and later in a cloud swing, Brett Marshall on his BMX bike, foot juggler Vicki Howle, the Jordans in the globe of death, and Bobby and Rosa Gibbs with the Don Johnson elephants. Pierre Jean was the announcer and the music was electronic. Business was off from previous years.

The New Pickle Circus played upscale venues, often arts centers, in the East, Midwest and California throughout the year. Entitled "Jump Cuts! The Circus Goes to the Movies," a reprise of the 1994 edition, the story line incorporated trapeze, web, slack wire, juggling and perch pole. Clowns Jeff Raz and Dianne Wasnak provided the link between acts as they tumbled in and out of cinematic situations in which circus skills were presented. "Jump Cuts! Take Two," the new production, debuted in the fall. Its story line had a genie sending the clowns into scenes from classic movies. Stay Tuned Department: Tandy Beal, the troupe's head and creative director, announced during the summer that she was working on a "circus/dance/theater, musical interpretation of Dante's *Inferno*, tentatively titled, *Sure is Hot Down Here*," which reminded one observer that Mel Brooks created a musical comedy about Hitler and the holocaust in one of his movies.

Circo Zoppe Europa played performing arts facilities in the United States and Canada in the last quarter of the year. The thematic production, entitled "A Horse, A Clown and a Ballerina," featured Giovanni Zoppe in his aerial loop to loop routine and later in pad riding, rider Tosca Zoppe, the Flying Wailendas on the high wire, Troy Metzler with Dimitri the elephant, and Alberto Zoppe in a comedy riding turn. Sandra Zoppe wrote and narrated the scrip. The Royal Lipizzaner Stallion Show exhibited around the country and went to England for six weeks. Owner Gary Lashinsky also had a permanent horse show at Las Vegas' Ex-

calibur Hotel. The Great Moscow Circus had a route booked through early February, but went in the barn at the end of 1994 because of poor business.

Cirque Eloize was in the Los Angeles area in the spring, Ontario in June, and Manhattan in December. The seven member company, composed of former Cirque du Soleil performers, was under the direction of Pierre Boileau. Playing arts centers, the hour-long production included acrobatics, juggling, clowning, and comedy magic, along with elements of theater and dance. The non-profit Make a Circus appeared in recreation centers, auditoriums and parks in California from June to September. Founded by Peter Frankham, the show incorporated an uplifting message in its story line for inner city kids. The ultra low-brow Jim Rose Sideshow, albeit with some turnover from past years, toured the rock and roll circuit. A chain saw juggler and contortionist were new, filling the gap left by the departure of Torture King Tim Cridland and Matt "The Tube" Crowley. The ultra high-brow Invisible Circus was at San Diego's La Jolla Playhouse in May and presumably elsewhere. Called "an aerobic workout for the mind," the performance entailed Victoria Chaplin and her husband Jean Baptiste Thierree in juggling, acrobatics, low wire, cloud swing and web routines.



George Carden Circus semis at Louisville for the Kosair Shrine Circus. Bill Rhodes photo

Circuses sponsored by Shrine temples and other fraternal and charitable organizations, especially police and fire fighter groups, were an important part of the business. Many lamented this style of sawdust because the generic title "Shrine Circus" hindered showmen from developing name recognition in the public's mind, and created the unhappy situation in which producers competed on price rather than merit in negotiating bookings. Nevertheless, many of these shows were of high quality with first-rate acts formerly under contract to

Ringling-Barnum, Big Apple, and major European companies. Many, if not most, performers preferred Shrine to tented dates because they generally offered better working conditions.

The annual mad scramble for dates occurred as temples sought new producers after beating the old ones down in price so much that they were dissatisfied with the end product, thus perpetuating a vicious cycle. Some Shrine showmen attempted to recoup their investment by extending the intermission up to a mind-boggling hour and a half to squeeze in as many elephant and other rides as possible. The public's negative reaction was predictable.

This destructive dynamic, which had been going on for years, became institutionalized in 1995 when the Shrine Circus Association of North America (SCANA), the organization of Shrine circus chairmen, recommended that each temple take three bids for its circus and chose the lowest. The Circus Producers Association retaliated early in 1996 by voting to boycott SCANA events and stop advertising in the SCANA newsletter, both of which were largely underwritten by circus owners. This combined with the inextricable decline in membership of Shrine and other fraternal groups nationwide, was an accident waiting to happen for the industry. Producers were well aware of their predicament, and many of them explored the opportunities to work directly with the numerous arenas built in recent years which did not host Ringling-Barnum.

The George Carden International Circus dominated the Shrine field with at times three, and possibly four, units in action simultaneously in virtually all parts of the country. One was managed by George Carden, another by his father Larry Carden, and a third by Dino Medeiros. Moslem Temple in Detroit was its flagship date with other major engagements including a long western route in the spring, a summer run for Milwaukee's Tripoli Temple, and the Fort Worth and San Antonio Shrines in the fall.

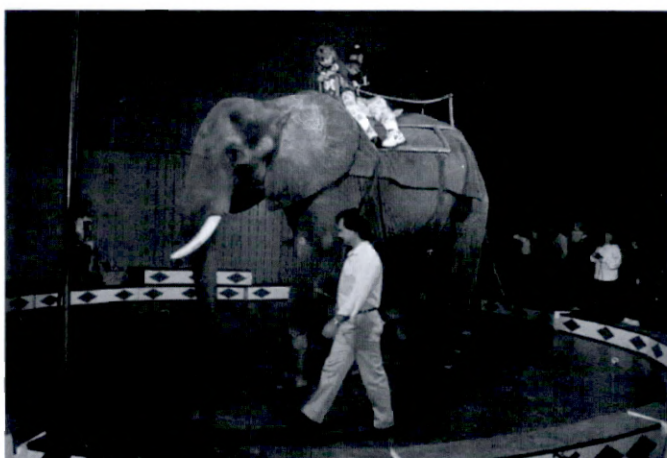
At January's Flint, Michigan Shrine the tanbark talent included Jacqueline Zerbini with the big cats; the Flying Rodriguez; the Deilkas sisters on rolling globes; Christine Zerbini with ponies; John, Tina and Sue Winn as the Centrons with their aerial motorcycle; Rene and Clara Turcios with bears

and dogs; the Estrada family on the Russian swing, the Castro family with a seven person pyramid on the high wire; Joe Frisco with the elephants; and Brian Miser, the Flying Eagle, as the human cannonball. Charles Amara was the ringmaster and Lee Mahoney had the band. Amazing audiences at November's Fort Worth Shrine were, among others, Lou Rossell with her leopards, Jimmy Hall and family with bears and later on unicycles, the Flying Condors, Gaylord Maynard with his comedy horse Chief Bear Paw, the Golden Aztecs in a living statue routine, and human cannonball David Smith.

The Royal Hanneford Circus had up to four units out at the same time. On a few occasions, owners Tommy and Stnuppi Hanneford fulfilled their many Shrine contracts by using either the Jordan or Hamid-Morton shows, augmenting these units with Hanneford personnel. Additionally, the company had a few fairs and a unit that played non-sponsored dates. A beautiful Canobbio European-style tent was first raised at Milwaukee's Great Circus Parade and later at Springfield, Massachusetts' big Eastern States Exposition.

Acts at the Columbus Shrine in April included the Bautistas on teeter board and later in the wheel of death, the Olates' dogs, Remo and Jenny Bizaro in a head balancing routine, hula hooper Dana Kaseeva, Gaylord Maynard with Chief Bear Paw, Los Mayas living statues, Ada Smieya with the cats, the Lou Ann Jacobs-Jorge Barreda elephants, and human cannonball Rebecca Smith. David Maas was ringmaster.

The Tarzan Zerbini Circus had numerous Shrine dates, including a long spring and summer under-canvas run in Canada. Called the Royal Canadian Circus up north, the show's talent included Patricia Zerbini with the tigers and later the elephants, the Carrillos on the high wire, clowns Billy Barton and Bobby Davis, Los Hernandez in a whip cracking display, Chepiakova and Kim with their horse riding bear, and the Zoppe riders with Giovanni and Tosca Zoppe. Joseph D. Bauer was ringmaster and performed illusions, and Larry Solheim was musical director. Tatjana Scetkovsha, Pedro Carrillo Jr.'s partner in a trapeze act, fell at Scarborough, Ontario on June 24, fracturing her jaw, damaging seven teeth, and severely cutting her chin. Tosca Zoppe was also seriously injured during the summer.



Jumbo lives! Bret Bronson with his African bull Willy doing the elephant ride at the Royal Hanneford Circus engagement in Poughkeepsie, New York in late February. Paul C. Gutheil photo.

Owners Tarzan Zerbini and Joe Bauer also produced the circus at the Florida State Fair in Tampa in February. Sawdust stars on this date included Larry Allen Dean with the cats, Sylvia Zerbini with six liberty horses, Pedro Carrillo Jr. on the high wire, Ivo and Neli Guerquiev in a hand balancing routine, and Patricia Zerbini with the elephants. The company also had a circus at a Montreal amusement park during the summer.

Garden Bros. Circus played its usual route in Canada in the spring starting with the big date in Toronto's Skydome in early March. After a month's recess, the show cranked it up again. The Skydome program included Hans and Roverta Winn with their aerial motorcycle act; William Voss with the white tigers; the Murcia troupe on the high wire; the

Newspaper ad for the Garden brothers school show in Wheeling, West Virginia in October. J. Scott Pyles collection.

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El Cashmere troupe on the teeter board; three rings of liberty horses (trained by John Herriott) presented by Ian Garden, Jr., Karen Turvey, and Jody Fulbright; Jack Cook's comedy car; the Flying Redpaths; clown Barry Lubin; elephants worked by Troy Metzler, Charlie Gray and Roy and Cindy Wells; and human cannonball David Smith. Brian LaPalme was the ringmaster and Mark Van Cleave cued the band. LaPalme totaled his van and trailer on the way to Thunder Bay, Ontario in late July. He left the show for awhile and was replaced by Mike Naughton.

Additionally, owner Ian Garden, Sr., along with brother Dick, toured a school show cleverly called the Piccadilly Circus through the Midwest and upper South in the spring. Acts on this run included Ken Sherburne who clowning, unicycled, juggled and did balloon art; the Hansen family with their roller skating and knockabout comedy routines; Gary Noel with his dogs and later spinning plates, and Doreen Laughery on the trapeze. Veteran Ben DeWayne was road manager and ringmaster.

In the fall the brothers put out another school show in the Midwest, this one called Hollywood Magic Circus. The roster included the Poema family on the teeter board and later in a hand balancing turn, Jody Fulbright with dogs and later a big and little horse act, Luis Munoz on the low wire, and hula hooper Lynne Polke. Ringmaster Brian LaPalme also performed illusions. Ben DeWayne was manager.

Circus Gatti played its regular territory in the Southwest and West in the late winter and early spring, and the Northwest and Western Canada in the summer. When the company, headed by Patricia Gatti, played the Los Angeles Shrine in April, the spangled luminaries included the Shooting Stars on the Russian swing, Wilson Barnes with the Don Johnson tigers, Tavana Luvas on Roman rings, Karl and Deborah Winn in the wheel of death and later with their aerial motorcycle, the Flying Valentines, Robert Zerbini and Nicholas Souren in a knockabout comedy routine, and John Pelton with the four show-owned elephants. Alex Bradley was announcer and Clem Toca led the musicians.

Circus America had Shrine dates in the East, mainly New England, from March to August. In the spring, owner Ed Migley purchased a 2000 seat, one ring Canobbio tent which was used on



Beautiful new big top on Ed Migley's Circus America at Newport, Rhode Island in late May or early June. James S. Cole photo.

a number of dates. At the Warwick, Rhode Island Shrine in May, acts appearing under it included Susan Lacey with a dozen Cuneo tigers, Davide Zoppe with monkeys, his wife Susan Sheryll with dogs, their son juggler Justino Zoppe, the Galambos family on the teeter board, the Sophia troupe on the Russian swing, the Fausto Scorpions in a risley routine, Alicia Redpath in a cloud swing, and Chip Arthurs with the John Cuneo elephants. David Weber was ringmaster and Paul Gaspar was in charge of the music.

The Hubler International Circus had a number of sponsored dates, many for Shrines, in mid-size towns around the country from February through November. In addition, owner George Hubler, Dayton, Ohio's gift to the arenic world, had at least one fair date. Acts engaged for the Lafayette, Louisiana Shrine in February included Susan Sheryll with dogs, juggler Justino Zoppe, Davide Zoppe with monkeys, Shane Johnson with six tigers, the Ga-

Liebel Family Circus on lot at Daventon, Florida on March 11. Ray Gronso.



lambo family on the teeter board and later on the Russian barre, and Bobby Gibbs with the Don Johnson elephants. Veteran Bill Browning was band leader. Among the performers at the Wheeling, West Virginia Shrine in August were Larry allen Dean with the tigers; the Fornasari duo on the perch pole; the Davide Zoppe family with its dog, monkey

and juggling displays; Bobby Steele with bears; the Soaring Swingsters; the Flying Luvass; hula hoopist Dana Kaseeva; and the Jacobs-Barreda elephants.

The Jordan International Circus played a largely Western route from February to July, although it had a few dates east of the Mississippi River. The Las Vegas Shrine booking in March was a rare under-canvas engagement using a leased Circus Vargas top. Working for the Shrine at Garden Grove, California in May the company's actors included Jody and Melanie Jordan in the wheel of death, Jairo Obando with lions and tigers, the Nicholson duo in a cradle act, the Alarcon musical clowns, Grumpy Kimes with pigs, the Flying Poemas, Ari Steeples with bears, Louie del Moral with four elephants, and Brian Miser as the human cannonball. The organization was rocked at year's end by founder Johnny Jordan's unexpected death.

The Plunkett Bros. Circus Shrined it in the Midwest in the spring for about ten weeks, and had its usual string of Texas dates in the fall. At Omaha, Nebraska the performers included James Arneburg with illusions and a dog act, Larry allen Dean with tigers, Les Kimes with pigs, the Geraldos on the high wire, Lee Stevens with baboons, the Bruski on unicycles, the Plunkett and Johnson elephants, and John Jordan's wheel of death. Rebekah Monroe was the singing ringmistress and Russ Darr had the band.

The Hamid-Morton Circus, the most venerable of auspices circuses, had its usual February through June adventures starting in Topeka and ending in Virginia Beach, Virginia. In between, the outfit appeared in Wisconsin, Oklahoma, Minnesota, Ohio, New Jersey and New York, all for one

stand each. Pleasing Shriners at Binghamton, New York in June were Yaro Hoffman with his cats, the juggling Lang family, Susan Sheryll with dogs, Davide Zoppe with monkeys, juggler Justino Zoppe, the Flying Condors, Tino Wallenda on the high wire, the Bill Morris elephants and the Hawthorn elephants presented by Chip Arthurs, and the Urias troupe in the globe of death. Peter Sturgis was ringmaster. End of an Era Department: When the show employed taped music at Pennsauken, New Jersey in early May, it was the first time ever a live band was not used on the show.

Circus Hollywood had a number of Shrine and fair dates including the big seven ring St. Louis temple booking in June at Busch Stadium. Personnel appearing in the three hour St. Louis extravaganza included Roverta and Tina Winn in a slide for life; Ada Smieya with the cats; the Flying Caceres; the Flying Redpaths; the Scheer Lumberjacks in their circus debut with wood chopping, tree climbing, and log rolling displays; the Winn family on sway poles; Jens Larson in chair balancing; Nickolaus Winn in the wheel of death; Bob Steele's bears; the Centrons on the aerial motorcycle; the Jorge Barreda and Bret Bronson elephants; and Clint Randall in a human cannonball routine. High Tech Department: Jay Cochrane sky walked across Busch Stadium with a camera strapped on him filming the view to the ground. The image was projected onto the stadium screen. During the busy fair season, owner Serge Coronas on occasion had two units engaged simultaneously.

The Great Wallenda Circus broke into the big time when it produced the show for Chicago's Medinah Temple from February 24 to March 12, one of the country's longest Shrine dates. Kinkers there included the John Hansen family in their roller skating routine, Andre Skarbecki with his lions of the Serengetti, Pam and Roger Zoppe with their chimps, the Flying Cortez, clown Larry Pisoni, Phil and Francine Schacht with Dondi the elephant, juggler Shane Hansen, Rietta Wallenda on trapeze and later sway pole, and Les Kimes with pigs. Becky Kimes was ringmistress and Russ Darr cued an excellent band. Attendance was up 10% at this date as Bozo the clown, a local television favorite, was the feature. Heavily promoted, he packed 'em in.

The show had other Shrine dates, fair dates, and an October under-canvas engagement for a Hasidic Jewish group in Brooklyn. Because of the sponsor's religious beliefs no women

were allowed on the bill. Dondi the elephant, for example, was presented by Phil Schacht *sans* Francine. Show owner Enrico Wallenda also spent part of the year performing with his sister Rietta as a single attraction at amusement parks and festivals.

The George Coronas Circus played Shrine dates in the spring and fall, and fairs in the summer. The big Atlanta Shrine booking was held under a huge tent leased from Harold Barnes. Acts appearing in the late March-early April Denver temple engagement included Ron and Joy Holiday with their uncaged cats, Ron and Chris Pace aka Sugar and Spice in their aerial cradle and perch pole exhibitions, Roger and Pam Zoppe with their chimps, the Flying Gaonas, and Bobby and Rosa Gibbs with the Don Johnson elephants. Scott Taylor was ringmaster, and Lee Reynolds directed the band. In November the troupe's tent and other equipment went to Atlanta where it was used on the Universal Big Top Circus.

Circus Valentine, headed by Ray Valentine, had summer and fall tours in Texas and Arkansas. Additionally, a Christmas unit went out at year's end. When the outfit played Houston in September for a police group the talent included Shane Johnson with six tigers; David Conner and Eddie Steeples on rola bola; the Murillos on the wheel of death, in a riding routine, and on the high wire; the Lunas on the Russian swing and later on the flying trapeze; Lana Steeples on the trapeze; Joanne Wilson with dogs; Sabrina Herrmann with her long rein horse Tazmania; Ari Steeples with bears, and Bobby and Rosa Gibbs with the elephants. Peter Sturgis was ringmaster and performed magic.

Ron Kelroy hired sawdust talent in March and April for El Hasa Temple in Ashland, Kentucky, and perhaps elsewhere. On the run were Jeff Plunkett with his comedy car, clowns Billy Barton and Bobby Davis, Dick Kohlreiser with dogs and ponies, and Bunky Boger with his buffalo. Locals let the buffalo loose in Inez, Kentucky; it was later found grazing with a herd of cattle. Additionally, Kelroy had circus acts at Milwaukee's Summerfest festival. Ernie McLean also had Kentucky Shrine dates which went virtually unreported in the trade press.

Paul Kaye's CircUSAmerica produced the Hadi Temple show in Evansville, Indiana in November. While only a four day engagement, the performance was the strongest of any Shrine program. Particularly remarkable was the number of animal

displays. Among the in-ring personnel were Susan Lacey with fifteen tigers, Raul and Margaret Rodriguez with sheepdogs, Les Kimes with his Pork Chop Revue, Roger and Pam Zoppe with their chimps, Jeff Plunkett with his comedy car, Dana Allen with the Diane Wilson seals, Jimmy and Tepa Hall with their bears, Eddie and Lana Steeples with their bears, the Flying Michaels, the Obando brothers on the high wire, Yuri Iouri in a novelty umbrella juggling number, Gaylord Maynard with his horse Chief Bear Paw, Wendy Plunkett on Roman rings, Johnny Jordan's wheel of death and globe of death, and fourteen Hawthorn elephants. The date marked the debut of Baby Nikki, John Cuneo's two year old bicycling elephant, escorted by Tom Thompson and Dione Arata.

Wayne McCary produced the Shrine circus in Manchester, New Hampshire and about half a dozen Maine towns in April and early May. Talent making this trek included the Garcia duo in a cradle act, Bruno Blaszk with the tigers, Ivo and Neli Guerguiev on Roman rings and hand balancing, Dana Allen with seals, Cesar Andro in a comedy mime routine, the Flying Cortez, and Bill Morris with the elephants. Charlie Van Buskirk was ringmaster and Bob Carabia had the band. At a Manchester performance Cesar picked Barry Lubin, Grandma of Big Apple Circus fame, out of the audience to be the stooge in a boxing parody; the two brought down the house.

Clyde Bros. Circus had Shrine bookings in Grand Forks, North Dakota in April and about two weeks in Iowa in June. In Iowa John Herriott was ringmaster and Ben Davenport worked some of the King Royal elephants. Owner Don Johnson also had his tiger and elephant acts booked on other shows throughout the season. It was a tough year as two elephants, along with a tiger and show property, were lost in a March fire at his Seagoville, Texas winter quarters. A third bull died later in the year.

Circuses were a common sight at fairs and festivals, usually as free attractions



Russell Bros. Family Fun Circus at San Fernando Valley Fair in California on July 29. Jerry Cash photo.

booked by carnivals or by the fairs directly. With a few exceptions these were small affairs, usually one ringers giving about an hour's worth of entertainment either under canvas or in front of grandstands. While a number of indoor producers worked fairs during the slack Shrine months, a few other showmen specialized in this brand of tanbark.

The Liebel Family Circus worked from January to November in the South and Midwest. While it appeared at a flea market, and a run of one and two dayers in Alabama suggested a tour under sponsorship, the core of its schedule was fairs and festivals. When the one ring, under-canvas troupe hit Delafield, Wisconsin in early July the sawdust stars included Gary Sladek on trampoline and in a cloud swing, Wendy Bell on Roman rings, Sasha Slaughter with his dogs, and Tony Liebel on the rola bola. Owner Tomi Liebel performed his balancing ladder

Clown Dusty Sadler doing make up as the come-in to the King Arthur Circus at New Jersey's Meadowlands Fair in June and July. Show was produced by Arthur Duchek. Paul C. Gutheil photo.



routine, worked six liberty ponies, and presented two elephants.

Circo Garcia appeared on midways from at least February to August. On the bill at West Dallas, Texas in February were the Flying Garcias, jugglers Anthony and Paula Valencia, Dulia Valencia with pigeons, Janet Munoz Kolacsar in a cloud swing, comedy trampoliners Bardo and Leo Garcia, and Margaret Valencia with dogs. Owner Jaime Garcia performed in both the wheel and globe of death. The Garcia family also packaged a scaled-down thrill show for fairs. At the Grand Rapids, Michigan fair in July Jaime Garcia walked on the outer rim of a ferris wheel.

Free child's ticket for Ray McMahon's Royal American Circus during late July dates in Ohio.

Russell Bros. Family Fun Circus played California fairs from May until at least September. The tent moved on two trucks and two trailers. Kinkers included Tom Molica who juggled and clowned. Ed Russell and Stephen Michaels were the owners, the former doing magic in the show. Dave and Judy Twomey had their Happytime Circus at a few Golden State midways. The itinerary was cut back considerably from past years. Swan Bros. Circus hurried in California and Nevada from at least May to August. Brothers Andy and Mike Swan, the proprietors, put on the entire performance under a tiny big top.

The King Arthur Circus was at the big Meadowlands Fair near New York City from June 22 to July 9. Talent included Davide Zoppe with monkeys, juggler Justino Zoppe, Susan Sheryll with Afghans, Valentino on the high wire, and clown Dusty Sadler. Goldie Duchek, wife of proprietor Arthur Duchek, was announcer. The company also produced the circus at the Yorktown Heights, New York fair in September with George Bertini on the low wire, the Fabulous Darnells with their magic and dog turns, and clowns Skin and Bones.

The Magic Circus mesmerized audiences on Midwestern and Eastern midways from the end of May to the end of September. Owners Barry and Jan Yiengst put on much of the program. In addition to both performing magic, Barry did a strait jacket escape and Jan manipulated marionettes. The

Zamperla Thrill Circus was the back end attraction for the United Shows Carnival on southern dates from September to November. Among the acts were Armando Cristiani in juggling and trampoline routines, and Eva Cristiani on the trapeze. The Carla Wallenda Thrill Circus presented mostly thrill acts at fairs.

Circus Continental, produced by Peggy Kaltenbach, provided a respite at a few showgrounds. At the Kentucky State Fair in August the program included Kris Kilpatrick with lions and tigers, Gary Noel in a plate spinning routine and with dogs, Ramon Estada with the George Carden liberty ponies and later with Carden's elephants, Les Kimes with pigs, and the Flying Gaonas. Rick Allen was the ringmaster. Jorge Barreda produced the circus at the Mississippi State Fair in October. Features included Susan Sheryll with dogs, Agi Carrillo in

a cloud swing, juggler Justino Zoppe, the Carrillos on the high wire, David Zoppe with monkeys, the Barreda elephants, and human cannonball Brian Miser. Richard Johnson was ringmaster.

Bill Carpenter had his Backyard Circus on midways, including the one at the big Ohio State Fair. While the typical format was to recruit children from the audience as performers, a new wrinkle was incorporated at a few dates by the addition of the Delilah Wallenda aerial troupe. The Fearless Flores Family Circus and Thrill Show amazed crowds at a Cassopolis, Michigan fair in July, and presumably elsewhere, with a dog and pony revue, a wheel and globe act, and an aerial motorcycle display, all presented by the Flores family. Bradd and Jeannette Tompkins had Downie Bros. at a Connecticut fair in August. James LaDini was ringmaster. The Stars 'n' Spangles Circus, producer unknown, was the attraction at a New Martinsville, West Virginia fair in August. Among the acts

was the Winn family's high platform motorcycle act. The Osario family announced in January that they would present the American Crown Circus at Western fairs under a 500 seat big top, but never produced any dates.

Petting zoos, the late twentieth century's version of the Zoological Institute, were a fixture on fairgrounds, offering a combination of exotic and barnyard animals from elephants and camels to sheep and goats. Two of the bigger companies on tour were Dave Hale's which exhibited at Milwaukee's Great Circus Parade in July, and Bob Commerford's which displayed at the Eastern States Exposition and the Ohio State Fair. Among the latter's features was Dickey the giraffe, a Ringling-Barnum alumnus. Another show, D. H. Luce's, managed by Robbie Engesser, was in the Northwest and Alaska.

Other circus-related activities on fairgrounds included Larry Records with his elephants, the Rix family with their bears, Lilli and Sven Kristensen with their leopards, and Donn Moyer with his reptiles. Additionally, many aerial and thrill acts performed as single attractions on midways. The side show lived on, but just barely, as only a handful of ten-in-ones toured. Best known was Ward Hall's extravaganza which played a number of fairs including the Meadowlands.

Free child's ticket to Harry Dubsky's Royal Palace Circus for late September Florida date. Bill Elbirn collection.

A bevy of small, mostly one ring, circuses performed in small, indoor venues. Most offered traditional fare and functioned as fund raising vehicles for charities such as PTAs and veterans' groups which were unable to contract larger circuses. Frequently selling their tickets over the telephone, tele-marketing in trade jargon, these troupes were usually called "school shows" within the profession because of their propensity to perform in school auditoriums and gyms. These aggregations usually trekked during the early and late months of the year, and generally played smaller towns which were inundated by wagon shows a century ago.

The Royal Palace Circus, called Circus Galaxy on some dates, was one of the most successful and established

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shows of this genre. Performing through the South, Midwest and East from February to at least October, the neatly framed trick moved on two show-owned trucks. Among the actors were Linda Herrmann with her white Lipizzaner stallion, Christina Dubsy with dogs, Harry Dubsy Jr. in his hand balancing routine which featured a one finger stand, and the Murillo family in acrobatics and rolling globe. Owner Harry Dubsy Sr. presented a leopard and black panther and ringmastered under the name of Harry Von Zell, a *nom de ring* apparently taken from a 1950s character actor best known as a supporting player on the old Burns and Allen television show. Dubsy was arrested in Auburn, New York in June for not providing the public adequate protection from a snake on the show. He pleaded guilty to the misdemeanor and was fined \$10.

Ron Bacon's Famous Cole Circus, called Santa's Christmas Circus at some winter dates, hurrahed through the Midwest and upper South from mid-March to mid-May and again at year's end. Acts on the spring route included Shane and Nicole Wainwright on trampoline, clowns Nacho and Dulia Valencia, Margaret Valencia with poodles, Janet Valencia with an aerial number and foot juggling, and hand balancer Pedro Morales. Ringmaster Barry Yiengst also demonstrated magic. Personnel on the winter route was similar, although Travis Green was ringmaster and magician.

The American Family Circus marched for ten weeks in the spring and eight in the fall, all in Florida and Georgia. This one had been called American Showtime Circus in the past, but the name was changed after Stu and Sara Miller bought out Jim Reeder during the year. The company moved on five show-owned steering wheels and carried two horses and two leopards. Actors cashing pay checks on

Circus Pages truck at Beatrice, Nebraska on April 21. Ron Sanford photo.



this one at various times included John and Mary Ruth Herriott in a horse display, Derrick and Lisa Rosaire with their bears, Ivo and Neli Guerguiev in their hand balancing routine, and Roberto Torres on the slack wire. The Jose Moreno family made the complete season. Stu Miller performed magic while his wife Sara handled the uncaged leopards.

Circus Pages was open for business in the Midwest, the Plains states, the South, and perhaps elsewhere, often appearing in armories. The show was something of a family affair as owner Jorge Pages worked the cat act and the two elephants while wife Frieda performed a Roman rings routine. Other talent included James Earhart who was ringmaster, magician, and dog presenter; and clown Shannon Fleming. This troupe was one of the few of its type to display exotic animals.

Ron Morris framed Popeye's Magic Circus in the spring, and the Olde Tyme Family Circus in the summer. Each played school gyms in the Northeast for phone promotions for about five weeks. Additionally he toured Escapades on Ice through the same territory in the fall. On the summer string the talent included Eddie Steeples with chimps, Sylvan Steeples with birds, and aerialists and foot jugglers Gordon and Vicki Howle. Floyd Bradbury was road manager, announcer and magician.

Yankee Doodle Circus, owned by Mike Naughton, had bookings in the East from February to April. Among the acts were the Fabulous Darnells with illusions and later their dogs, clown Bill Vaughan, juggler Armando Cristiani, and Lilly Cristiani on the trapeze. The Royal American Circus worked in the Midwest and South during in the summer and fall, and possibly other times. When the company played Richmond, Indiana in July, the spangled stars included Manuela Torres on the rola bola, the Rodriguez family on rolling globes, Luigi



Carlos Svenson recreates the riding act of 19th century immortal Richard Sands at the Circus World Museum's Mandalay Circus in Irving, Texas from October 13-22. Greg Parkinson photo.

and Gabriella Savio with poodles, juggler Jose Torres, and the Bertini family on unicycles. Owner Ray McMahon was ringmaster, and the music was taped.

Cathy Rogers' offerings worked under a variety of names including Children's Variety Show, Marvelous Mystics on Parade, and Santa's Christmas Show. She had troupes in most parts of the continent sometime during the year, with occasionally up to five units out simultaneously playing very short routes. Pleasing Dallas audiences at the Children's Variety Show in June were the Hart family in a Jargo horse act and later on unicycles, and plate spinner Middy Streeter. When her Christmas show played Cincinnati in late December the talent included Peachtree the clown, juggler Bob Whitcomb, hand balancer Wendy Bell, comedy trampoliner Gary Sladek. Show manager Floyd Bradbury, a veteran of the genre, was also ringmaster and magician.

The Star Circus rollicked for a dozen weeks in the South at the first of the year, and apparently made a tour of the Midwest in the fall. On the bill at Ruston, Louisiana in February were Eddie and Joyce Sherman as clowns Bumbles and Miss Sparkle, Oscar and Kathy Garcia in a juggling and later a casting routine, contortionist Anita Seay, Chris Rose in an aerial act and later with a pony, and Kathy Garcia with dogs. Owner Byron Bowman performed illusions. The Wonderland Circus marched through South Carolina from late January to early March. Awaiting the multitudes on the route were



Euro Circus was an attraction at Myrtle Beach, South Carolina using an old Cirque du Soleil tent. Tim Tegge photo.

Irvin Hall with his comedy unicycle and later his baboons, clown Paul Dean, Natalia Dionne on the trapeze, magician Phil Chandler, and the cycling Bruskis. Owner Bill Brickle was ringmaster and presented his trained dogs.

The Billy Martin All Star Circus bopped around New York State for fifteen weeks starting in January, and another seven weeks in the fall. Among the performers were Tracy Bannister in an aerial number, Susanna Vidbel in a cloud swing, Emil and Debbie Goetschi in a whip display, the Bannister family's dogs, and Angela Martin on trapeze. Juggler and rola bolaer Pat Davison joined in February. Owner Billy Martin was ringmaster. Jose Cole had his International Circus in the upper Midwest in the spring and early summer. Among the in-ring personnel were Irvin Hall on comedy unicycle and later with baboons, Marina Castro on trapeze, and Bones Craig with two African elephants. Gary Holveck was ringmaster and magician. The Fornasari family's All Star Comedy Circus was in Alabama, Missouri and Georgia

Anti-circus billboard put up by the People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals in Florida. Billy Burr photo.



in October and November using mainly family acts. They may also have had a unit out earlier in the year.

The Indoor Circus Spectacular marched through Tennessee and North Carolina in October. Co-owned by Dean Della Loggia and Barry Yiengst, the exhibition starred Dick Kohlreiser with liberty ponies and later dogs, Tom Demery with mixed liberty animals and later with Anna Louise the elephant, and clown Elmo Gibb. The Reynolds Family Showcase Theater was barely mentioned in the trade press. Fragmentary data suggested it had its usual Midwestern engagements with owner Bill Reynolds as ringmaster and Travis Green as magician on the spring dates. Veteran Sid Kellner had his George Matthews Great London Circus at a few late summer police dates in California. Talent included clown Kip Reynolds, the Flying Redpaths, foot juggler Chester Cable, Bobby Moore with dogs and the Dancing Gauchos. Shelia Winn was ringmistress.

Circuses and circus acts were much in evidence at amusement and theme parks, resort areas, flea markets and renaissance fairs. Baraboo, Wisconsin's Circus World Museum had its usual strong program featuring the Mark Karoly riding act. Others on the bill included aerialist Rebecca Perez, hula hooper Natasha Rodriguez, Lee and Judy Stevens with their baboons, Pedro Carrillo Sr. and Jorge Guzman on the high wire, clowns Jim Williams and Bill

Machtel, and Brian French with the Cristiani elephants. David SaLoutos was the ringmaster and Rick Percy led the band. Outreach efforts were headed by Milwaukee's Great Circus Parade which was its usual huge smash. In October, the museum produced the Mandalay Circus near Dallas, using many of the summer acts augmented by riders Carlos and Susanna Svenson, juggler T. J. Howell, and Cathy and George Hanneford with elephants. A number of wagons and artifacts were displayed as part of a circus music exhibit at the Eastern States Exposition. The museum was the site of a two day seminar on circuses past and present in June.

Peru, Indiana's International Circus Hall of Fame had its doors open from late June until early September. Incorporating circus acts into the offerings for the first time, the attraction was host to Jorge and Lou Ann Barreda with their elephants, Jens Larson in a hand balancing routine, clowns Pat Kelly and Bob Hurley, Mike Rice with his dressage horse, and Melanie Slonaker on single trapeze. John Fugate was ringmaster. Exotic cat trainer Larry Allen Dean was also on the bill for a while, giving a talk on endangered species and demonstrating his training techniques.

Circus acts were very popular at traditional parks. Great Escape park in Lake George, New York offered a program that included riders Carlos and Susanna Svenson, Gilda Cristiani with leopards, the Flying Cortez, and the Urias troupe in the globe of death. Steve Rox was ringmaster. New York's Catskill Game Farm had John Welde with bears, and Harry Locker with two of Mike Hackenberg's African elephants. The Tommy Bartlett Ski, Sky and Stage Show at Wisconsin Dells emphasized circus acts more than in past years with juggler Dieter Tasso, the Nock family in thrill acts, and the Ashton family in risley. Jay Cochrane, the Prince of the Air, did a daily sky walk at a Florida park in the spring. Bill Morris presented his elephants at a Maine animal park during the summer.

George and Vicki Hanneford produced the circus at Fort Lauderdale's Thunderbird Swap Shop, changing the talent throughout the year. Among the stars were aerialist Mark Pilger, Maya Zerbini with dogs, juggler Nicholas Zerbini, the Cristiani family on the trampoline, bareback rider George Hanneford III, mime Cesar Andro, and Catherine Hanneford with elephants. When the Hanneford contract expired in November the Snowden Circus, headed by veteran showman Bob

Snowden and tent magnate Harold Barnes, came in with clown Kenneth Sherburne, the roller skating Hansens, Frank and Doris Galambos with their soccer playing dogs, and the Esqueda family on teeter board, unicycles and the Russian barre. Their contract only ran eight weeks and early in 1996 the Hannefords began directing the show again.

Euro Circus frolicked at Fantasy Harbour, an entertainment complex in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina from April to December. Produced by Bob Maxwell and managed by Martin Durham, the company used the 1500 seat Cirque du Soleil big top from the Mirage Hotel. The Russian and Ukrainian artists hand balanced, presented dogs, teeter boarded, hula hooped, and juggled, among other turns. Renaissance faires employed a number of show folks including John Lepiarz and David Casey, well remembered as Fish and Oaf from the Big Apple Circus. Bobby and Rosa Gibbs with the Johnson elephants played one in Wisconsin in July.

The spot date, the creation of a circus for a very short period, often only one or two performances, was an under-documented segment of the industry. Without doubt some of these troupes were produced by well-known names in the business using different titles or whose connection was not explicit. While these ventures were not a significant part of the landscape, a few were major undertakings and all exemplified the remarkably fluid nature of the business as these operas were literally here today and gone tomorrow.

The Universal Big Top Circus revealed for ten days in Atlanta in November, about a week less than last year. Founded by music promoter Cedric Walker, it was the first circus to use largely black personnel and to market to the African-American community. It was a first-class production, using advanced lighting, smoke and sound systems under a one ring top rented from George Coronas. Among the artists were the Ayak brothers in their aerial routine, Pam and Roger Zoppe with chimps, Ted McRae with Chris Kilpatrick's lions and tigers, contortionist Nayakata, the venerable King Charles comedy unicycle troupe, Chris and Ron Pace in their cradle act and on a perch pole, Margo Lewis on web, and Catherine Hanneford with the elephants. Casual Cal DuPre was ringmaster, and four clowns provided the mirth. While the music was recorded, it was from an original score composed by Keyth Lee, and augmented by two singers. Melding the

traditional European circus with black urban culture, it was a noble effort, exemplifying Earl Chapin May's felicitous dictum that the circus was an "ever changing, never changing" institution.

Frank Curry's Ronald McDonald Circus was a big time spot date in Nashville in early February. Among the kinkers were Delilah and Terry Wallenda on the high wire, Andre Skarbecki with his Serengetti lions, the Urias troupe in the globe of death, Davide Zoppe's monkeys, Susan Sheryll's Afghans, juggler Justino Zoppe, the King Charles comedy unicycle troupe, the Galambos family on the teeter board, Bill Morris' elephants, and human cannonball Jennifer Smith. The production also included the 50 piece McDonald's marching band. The Big Top Circus appeared at Arcadia, Ohio for the local Lions Club on June 10. Owned by Jim Davis, a state employee in real life, the one ringer used a 60 foot round top with one 30 foot middle section. Acts included clowns Betty Unser and Richard Haines, Paul Hoskinson with dogs, rola bolaer and plate spinner Shawn Dillon, juggler Jay Gilligan, and Caesar Osario with a King Royal elephant. Donald Brewer was ringmaster and the music was on tape.

The majority of spot dates were smaller affairs. The Big John Strong Magic and Variety Circus was sighted on the West Coast, both under canvas and indoors. When the company played Oxnard, California in March the in-ring features included hand balancer Ken Willer, Henry and Dolores Crowell on the trampoline and later in their whip act, Christine Farnum with dogs and later on the aerial lyre, juggler Dan

Program cover for the Universal Big Top Circus at Atlanta. John Polacsek collection.



Wiles, and Ralph Prado as Flako the clown. Owner John Strong Jr. ate fire, swallowed swords, performed magic and worked a snake. Sparks Circus rode again at Wichita Falls, Texas in April under Jamie Garcia's tent and with that family's acts. Others showcased were Andrea Jewel with Doug Terranova's miniature liberty horses, Brad Jewel with Terranova's elephant Kamba, and Mike and Michelle Clark with lions and tigers. The title came from the booker, "Sparky" Sparks of Willis Point, Texas.

Bill Birchfield produced the Jaycees Magic Circus at Kissimmee, Florida in February with Ron and Joy Holiday in their cat dancers display, Tino Wallenda on the high wire, juggler Tim Kapp, and Carl and Patti Reed's dog and pony revue. Vincent A. Paglinao produced the Clownfest Big Top Circus at Seaside Heights, New Jersey in the late summer with plate spinner Ben Lance; Gordon and Vicki Howle in their cradle, dog and foot juggling routines; and Jimmy Brown (presumably not the former Cleveland Browns running back) with illusions. Daniel McCallum was ringmaster and presented a whip cracking display. The KARE Youth League Circus was at Durate, California in early June with juggler Dario Vazquez, the Ramos family in the globe of death, Dan Westfall with Jeeter the chimp, and Keith Jones with one of Gary Johnson's elephants. Tony Blanco was ringmaster and performed illusions. Davide Zoppe put on a show for the Delphi, Indiana American Legion Post in December with his family's acts and with juggler and rola bolaist Pat Davison. John Fugate was ringmaster.

Tino Wallenda produced an under-canvas circus in Sarasota, Florida late in the year. Talent included the Bertini bicycle act, Eddie Schmidt with his tigers, Giovanni Zoppe in his loop the loop routine, Sacha Pavlata and Aurelia Wallenda in a double cloud swing, and Tanya Herrmann with her high school horse. Wallenda also had his Circus Maranatha in Mexico in January. Dick McCarthy's American International Circus was in Detroit and Nashville in the summer. Among the talent was the Brigadier in his comedy human cannonball routine, the foot juggling Francarros, and Joanne Wilson with dogs. The mysterious Popinpooh Circus listed two one-day stands in Florida, and one in Michigan in May and July; no further data about it was forthcoming.

A few Fortune 500 companies booked circus acts for corporate events. When the New York Life In-



Susan Lacey with the Hawthorn white tigers on Ed Migley's Circus America in Newport, Rhode Island. James S. Cole photo.

insurance Company celebrated its 150th anniversary with a huge blow out in Madison Square Garden, the arenic talent included John and Tina Winn on sway poles, Jack Cook with his comedy car, the Jorge Barreda elephants, John Welde's bears, and Dick Kohlreiser's dogs. Ava Williams was agent on the engagement. Bob Yerkes organized a circus for an AT&T party in Hawaii in June where Dario Vazquez juggled, Matt Plendl hula hooped, Noby Arden did a bungee cord act, and Yerkes performed the slide for life. The Davide Zoppe family and hand balancer Danny Carey were the entertainment at a Victoria's Secret party in Dayton, Ohio at the first of the year. The Zoppes, this time with rola bolaist Pat Davison, also performed at the Allen Bradley Company's Christmas party in Milwaukee.

The amateur youth circus flourished, providing fun and teaching entry level circus techniques to children and adolescents. The circus school in Montreal, the farm system for Cirque du Soleil, was the only one on the continent that offered training that approached the level of the great European schools. Because of the lack of other educational institutions, youth circuses took on increased importance. A surprising number of professionals were first introduced to the business at one of the youth shows or camps. Sarasota High School's Sailor Circus, headed by Juli Snyder after the retirement of long-time director Bill Lee, was by far the best known of the high school endeavors. Another old timer in the kid business was Washington state's Wenatchee Youth Circus, founded in 1954. Headed by Paul Pugh, the show open aired it on and off throughout the summer with per-

formers ranging from three to nineteen years old. A third venerable juvenile show was Peru, Indiana's Circus City Festival Circus which marched for the 36th time in July. This one boasted 250 performers and a 55 piece band.

Other youth circuses included Redlands, California's Great All American Youth Circus directed by Jon Garrett, and Chicago's Windy City Circus Troupe headed by Ed Sheehan. Bruce Pfeffer's Circus of the Kids worked with physical education departments to train students in circus skills. The Cascade Youth Circus in Maple Valley, Washington was directed by Charles and Debbie Johnson. In its 48th year, Florida State University's Flying High Circus appeared in Tallahassee in April and at Callaway Gardens in the summer. The Gamma Phi Circus at Illinois State University hurrahd for another year.

Children from ten to eighteen learned performing skills at Circus Smirkus, a camp founded by Rob Mermin in Greensboro, Vermont. After training, the show went on the road, giving exhibitions in thirteen towns in three states. The nineteen newly minted artists displayed juggling, acrobatics, clowning, wire walking, and trapeze under a small tent which sat about 450. The two hour production, called "Class Clowns," was ringmastered by Jeff Jenkins, a 1986 Clown College graduate. The husband and wife team of Michael Killian and Jessica Hentoff directed a circus camp in Pittsfield, Massachusetts, calling it the Berkshire Kids Circus when it performed in late August. The Fern Street Circus, headed by John Highkin, a Circus Flora alumnus, was an after-school circus arts program in San Diego.

Members of the Canestrelli family were coaches and guest artists. The themed program was entitled "A Feast of Fools."

A number of benefit performances were conducted by generous showmen. George Hubler organized the Showfolks Circus in Sarasota in early December using, among other acts, Joanne Wilson with dogs and Bob Moyer with the Bentley Bros. cats. Rick Wallenda produced the circuses for the eleventh annual Sarasota Circus Festival at year's end. Many of the local show people appeared. The Gibsonton, Florida Showman's Circus presumably raised money for local charities, but no word of it reached the trade press.

Many artists earned part of their living at sport shows, ice shows, trade shows, dinner theaters, cruise ships and other venues needing live entertainment. Jeanette Rix with her bears and Tom and Bonnie Brackney with their dogs played a sports show in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania in early February, a typical engagement of this type. Casino showrooms provided a large number of jobs, so many in fact that Las Vegas was something of a circus center. Circus Circus Casino in Vegas employed the Flying Rodogels, juggler Dario Vazquez, the Flying Tabares, and the high wire walking Abulet brothers in June. The Tropicana Hotel, at the other end of the strip, featured Chinese acrobats in one of its rooms. At a weird dinner theater in New York City all the wait staff were actors who put on sketches as they served food, which would be of no consequence except that circus acts were the floor show.

Delavan, Wisconsin's Clown Hall of Fame inducted Jimmy "Happy" Williams, Dimitri, Don Burda, Poodles Hanneford, and Joe Vani and Chester Sherman of Sherman brothers fame. It was reported in November that the organization was studying the possibil-

Truck for Circus Smirkus, a New Hampshire camp which put on its own show. Robert Sugarman photo.



ity of relocating to Milwaukee. Immortalized in Sarasota's Ring of Fame in January were flyer Alfredo Codona, band leader Karl King, show owners D. R. and Isla Miller, and the Nerveless Nocks of thrill act renown, worthies all. The Ringling Museum honored the Nock family as the Sarasota Circus Celebrities of 1995.

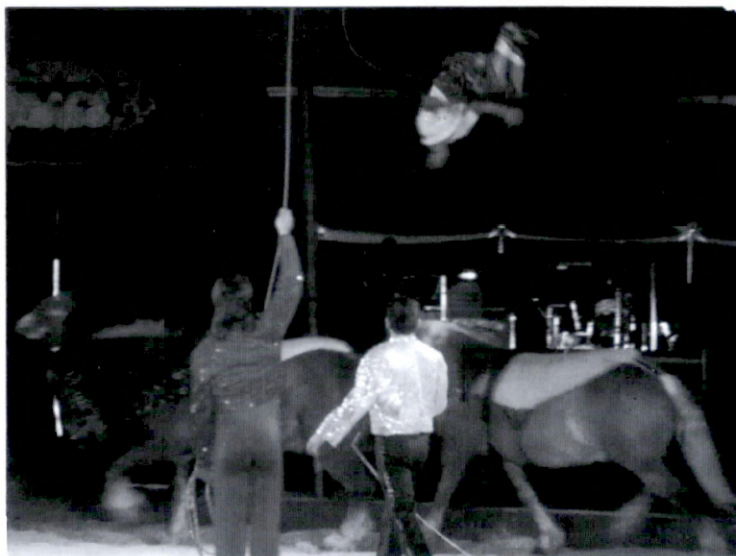
Michael Moschen, one of the greatest jugglers ever, played performing arts centers as a single. He was also featured in the August issue of the *Smithsonian Magazine*. Tom McKittrick had a one man show which included human blockhead, human pin cushion, fire eating, sword swallowing and iron tongue routines on college campuses where doubtless the audiences went wild. Bobby Reynolds had the Dreamland Circus Museum and Side Show at Brooklyn's Coney Island during the summer. Felix Adler Days was held in Clinton, Iowa in August. Chicago Stadium and the Boston Garden, two landmarks on the circus map, met the wrecker's ball. Both Arthur Wirtz in Chicago and Ringling-Barnum in Boston put on fabulous productions in the venues' glory days.

Blast From the Past Department, Part One: A reunion of Ringling-Barnum showgirls was held in Sarasota in May. Part Two: A reunion of Cole Bros. personnel was held in Rochester, Indiana in June. Bridgeport, Connecticut's Barnum Museum had an exhibition on clowns from June to November. In other Bridgeport news, a report surfaced in April that a group was trying to build a Barnum-themed amusement park in the city. Good Ridance Department: Circus of the Stars was canceled after nineteen years of demeaning circus artists by conveying the impression that second rate movie and television personalities were competent circus performers after a few weeks training.

An exhibition of the circus paintings of the late, great Bob Weaver was held at an Indianapolis art gallery in November. Surf's Up Department: The circus met the Internet with Big Apple, Soleil, the Flying High Circus, Garden Bros., the L. A. Circus, and the Jim Rose sideshow all having home pages. The Elephant Manager's Association and the Ringling Museum each had one as did elephant man Shannon "The Shaz" Woodcock. Happy

Birthday: retired rider Joe Hodgini turned 100 in June.

Book Watch Department: It was an outstanding year on the literary front as a number of new volumes appeared, some of major significance. Among them were biographies of Lobster Boy Grady Stiles, the Great Farini (nee William Hunt), and P. T. Barnum, the last superbly illustrated; and for intellectuals side show entrepreneur Jim Rose's auto-



Mark Karoly turning a horse to horse somersault during a performance at the Circus World Museum in 1995. Fred Pfening photo.

biography. Other books included a scholarly examination of side show banners, a group of interviews with circus personalities, a history of Indiana circuses, a collection of the writings of the distinguished press agent and pioneer historian Charles H. Day, and a biographical dictionary of nineteenth century English show people. Of special note were Bruce Feiler's literate account of clowning on the Beatty-Cole show, Jeffrey Masson and Susan McCarthy's path-breaking investigation into the emotional lives of animals, and Lee Cavin's first-rate historical novel. Jim Judkins, the late twentieth century's answer to Charles Andress, edited another fine route book for Carson and Barnes. Tim Tegge did the same for Beatty-Cole, the first for that show since 1961. The unanimous winner of the Antony Hippley Cox Award for the year's best circus book was Ernest Albrecht's *The New American Circus*, a comprehensive analysis of the new wave shows which have repainted the North American circus canvas in recent years.

As is the nature of life, many wonderful members of the circus community departed this vale of tears in 1995. Among them were: Emmett Bejano, alligator-

skinned man; Dub Duggan, veteran showman; Bill Dykes, concessionaire; Bob Emerico, retired clown; Joe Fleming, circus fan and friend to the industry; Scott Hall, old-time sideshow man; Harry Hammond, long-time Beatty-Cole executive; Elfie Althoff Jacob, member of famous European circus family; Rudy Jacob, veteran showman; Edith "Shrimp" Johnston, friend to the profession; John Jordan, show owner; Theol Nelson Marlowe, member of the famous Nelson family of performers; James McGarrity, retired concessionaire; Sue Pelto, member of the original Flying Valentines; Betty Schmid, circusiana dealer; Orlyn E. Schroeder, agent for the Culpepper and Merriweather Circus; Louise Tegge, retired show person; and Duane Thorpe, longtime Ringling-Barnum clown.

This account, for all its errors of emphasis and omission, would be far less comprehensive were it not for the kindness of strangers and friends who generously sent me an unending stream of documentation. This overview's merits are in large measure the result of their munificence; its deficiencies, which are doubtless legion, are mine. This year's felons include: Harold Barnes, Wilbert Bender, Joe Bradbury, Billy Burr, Paul Butler, Jerry Cash, Pete Cash, James S. Cole, Tony Conway, Chantal Cousineau, Fred Dahlinger, Bill Elbirt, Ray Gronso, Paul Gutheil, Ken Harck, Sally Harwood, Paul Holley, Al House, Don James, Sheelagh Jones, Jim Judkins, Jim Kernon, Robert Lessard, Bob MacDougall, Frank Mara, Niall McCabe, John McConnell, Dan McGinnis, Sr., Stu Miller, Ron Morris, Rex Owens, Greg T. Parkinson, Sandy Pfening, John Polacsek, J. Scott Pyles, Richard J. Reynolds III, Bill Rhodes, Ron Sanford, Karen Severson, J. Kurt Spence, Mike Sporrer, Leroy Sweetland, Robert Sugarman, Tim Tegge, Bradd Tompkins, Frank Thompson, Enrico Wallenda, and Warren Wood. I took up far too much of Bill Biggerstaff's time as he kindly shared his insights. As always, Bobby Gibbs, who loves the circus more than anyone else I know, was a tremendous help. Ably edited by Don Marcks, *Circus Report*, the paper of record for the industry, was an indispensable source. *Amusement Business*, *Showfolks of Sarasota Newsletter*, *White Tops*, and cuttings from scores of newspapers were also useful.

This paper was presented at the CHS convention, in San Antonio, Texas on October 19, 1995.

The balloon ascension as a free exhibition to attract the public to American circuses was inaugurated in 1870. Previous to this, a pre-performance ballyhoo for many shows consisted of a parade through town, eventually ending up in front of the canvas pavilion. As the improvement of roads allowed circuses to travel with larger wagons and heavier equipment, parades became more elaborate and more spectacular. Band chariots, wagons exhibiting the contemporary lion kings and their beasts, huge and ornate pagantries on wheels, thirty and forty horse hitches, elephants and camels in harness, mechanical music rigs--all contributed at one time or another to the great advertising caravan.

During an age when every town had their own local band and a band stand was a symbol of pride in most every village park, band music on the circus lot was another means of attracting a crowd. Every show of reasonable size carried at least one group of uniformed musicians, the brass band being the loudest and thereby the most useful. In time, the musicians were augmented by mechanical devices. Spalding & Rogers brought out the Apollonicon in 1849, and Nixon & Kemp introduced the calliope in 1857, both oddities of their day capable of drawing avid public attention.

Another popular free act prior to the introduction of balloons was the daily ascension of a wire-walker from ground level to the tent's center pole. This device appears to have been inaugurated around 1856 when Sands' circus presented Mlle. Isabelle, who walked the wire a distance of some 300 feet. The following year there were at least five other shows exhibiting a similar act.¹ And not to be outdone, the creative Yankee Robinson featured the handsome young horse, Black Hawk, in 1857, trained to walk a plank on the perilous journey to the top of the tent, this according to Robert Dingess in his unpublished manuscript.

But at a time when airplanes were unheard of and the urge to emulate the magical flight of birds was a sometime youthful dream during the inevitable journey toward maturity, the phenomenon of a large balloon, filled with hot air, rising from the earth and carrying a man skyward was an awesome spectacle for people living in a horse-drawn century. And circus pro-

WHAT GOES UP ... COMES DOWN

By William L. Slout

prietors eventually came to understand this.

The hot air balloon was first launched successfully in 1783 in France by the Montgolfier brothers. Their observation that smoke rose into the air was the basis for experimentation with lighter than air craft. The original tests were naturally primitive. No passengers were sent aloft and the prototype did not achieve a great distance, but the theory was confirmed.

If at this early stage there were no

A portion of a Lake's Hippo-Olympiad newspaper ad used in 1871. All illustrations are from the Pfening Archives.

LAKE'S HIPPO-OLYMPIAD

AND

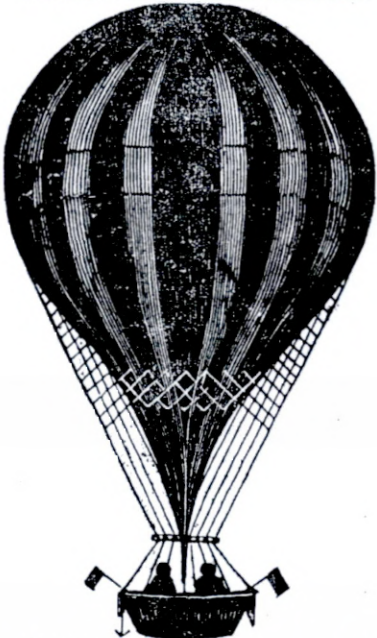
Mammoth Circus!

The Most Thoroughly Organized and Complete in the World!

UNDER THE MANAGEMENT OF

MADAME AGNES LAKE!

THE ONLY COMPANY TRAVELING THAT GIVES A



Free Balloon Ascension every Day!

logical uses for the balloon there was at least a curiosity value. Balloons became objects for exhibition and intrepid aeronauts the exhibitionists. On January 9, 1793, Jean Pierre Blanchard, one of the earliest of American aeronauts, ascended from the yard of the Walnut Street prison in Philadelphia. President George Washington and an assemblage of dignitaries

watched the hydrogen-filled balloon rise to over 5,000 feet and disappear in its travel of fifteen miles before alighting into a patch of woods near Woodbury, New Jersey. The craft carried Blanchard, his black dog, and a letter of introduction from the President--it being the first piece of air mail on the America continent. This was Blanchard's forty-fifth ascension but his first on our side of the Atlantic Ocean.

Blanchard, a native of France, had even at a young age an inventor's curiosity. As early as 1781 he constructed a flying machine fashioned after the manner of birds in flight, having four huge wings operated by hand and foot levers. The contraption was, of course, a failure. But once the Montgolfier brothers had proven the principle of lighter than air flight, Blanchard wasted no time in accepting the balloon as a legitimate device for exhibition and experimentation and in the ensuing years made forty-four flights throughout the European continent. His greatest triumph, however, eight years before coming to America, occurred when he crossed the English Channel with Dr. John Jeffries of Boston. This was the first air voyage between nations, hailed "the eighth wonder of the world."²

The channel crossing occurred on January 7, 1785. It goes unexplained how Blanchard and Jeffries came to be partners in this historic channel crossing. Nevertheless, at 8:00 a.m. the balloon ascended over the white cliffs of Dover, a tribute to Blanchard's imagination. The gondola, shaped like a bathtub, had a rear fin and four wing-like rudders, attachments intended to steer and propel the balloon. Blanchard was seemingly unaware that the airship was solely subject to the whim and fancy of the wind and not human guidance. The flight, which was fraught with hair raising events too lengthy to go into here, terminated shortly after three o'clock in the afternoon in a wooded area not far from Calais. The heroes of the treacherous crossing--unlike Lindbergh almost a

century and a half later--landed inauspiciously, with no cheering well-wishers, no champagne, no flags unfurled.³

Returning to the Philadelphia of 1793, one might wonder why anyone would choose to do anything within the walls of a prison. But to Blanchard, enclosure of the Walnut Street prison was essential for at least two reasons. It protected his equipment from mettlesome curiosity seekers and it allowed him to charge an admission fee for observing the preparation and take-off of his balloon. Then, too, the open space of the prison yard was free of encumbering trees and other objects that might interfere with the early stage of ascent. And there was always the danger of fire or explosion during the time when the balloon was being readied. A newspaper item of the day read in part: "It is hoped that the spectators may not crowd too near, or interrupt Mr. Blanchard whilst employed in his preparations, as it might be attended with fatal effects, should he be incommoded."⁴

It appears that many of these spectators intended to follow the floating balloon on horseback, attempting to keep apace as best they could. In an open letter to the newspaper, Blanchard explained: "You wish to know . . . where you may order your horses to stand that you may without losing time follow the aerostat. If the day is calm, there will be full time to leave the prison court without precipitation as in that case I shall ascend perpendicularly; but if the wind blows, permit me, gentlemen, to advise you not to attempt following, for the swiftest horses will be unable to keep up with me, especially in a country so intersected with rivers and so covered with woods."⁵

A short time after Blanchard's first American voyage, he was given permission to construct a rotunda on the Governor's lot on Chestnut Street, where he exhibited the balloon being prepared for his forty-sixth flight. But without the protection of prison walls, the vulnerable aircraft was damaged by stones thrown from the outside.

During this time, in this very city, John Bill Ricketts was conducting a circus on the corner of Twelfth and Market Streets. Here, some time during 1793, Blanchard sent up a balloon with a parachute attached containing a cat and a monkey. Some form of slow ignition was rigged to release the parachute at a certain altitude, which allowed the quadrupeds a safe flotation earthward. A contemporary account relates that the wind was in a south-

easterly direction when the balloon left the ground. As it passed over Bush Hill at an altitude of 500 feet the parachute was detached. The balloon then floated in the direction of Gloucester Point and the chute in the direction of Frankford, the future home of John O'Brien's circus enterprises.⁶ This ascension at Rickett's Amphitheatre marked the first balloon act with an American circus.

I am indebted to Stuart Thayer for another event concerning an early circus balloon ascension. An announcement in a Nashville, Tennessee, paper told of such an occurrence for Messrs. Myers and Johnstone's benefit with J. Purdy Brown's circus on December 26, 1827. Thayer also sent me an item from the Cincinnati *Daily Enquirer* of 1853 which, although has little to do with this narrative, I cannot resist including here. On April 24 of that year the paper announced an exhibition called Deihl & Co.'s Hydrogen Menagerie. The animals were all composed of silk cloth inflated with gas and all were somewhat animated and capable of performing tricks. The elephant was 21 feet high and 18 feet long. Among other objects, there was a whale some 30 feet in length and a giant 21 feet in height, all seemingly representing an early prelude to similar objects used in Macy's annual Christmas parade. In conjunction with this tented attraction was an ascensionist, W. M. Paulin, and fireworks were conducted by Mr. Deihl, advertised as the "celebrated pyrotechnist."⁷

Perhaps the first time a balloon was put to practical use occurred with its introduction by the Union Army early in the Civil War. On June 17, 1861, Thaddeus Lowe, who had recently flown the 900 miles from Cincinnati to Unionville, South Carolina, demonstrated the effectiveness of his soaring vessel to President Lincoln. With his crew, he ascended aloft for a brief period and communicated with the groundlings by telegraph. The performance must have been impressive to the illustrious observers; for, in time, T. S. C. Lowe's Balloon Corps, consisting of a number of free-lance balloonists, was formed to assist the Union Army. Lowe's balloons were put into limited service to aerially observe enemy troop movements and to direct Union artillery. Only a week following his demonstration Lowe and a sketch artist floated a balloon near a Confederate encampment adjacent to Fall's Church, a community near Arlington, Virginia, recording enemy activity for the first time. A month later another of Lowe's ascensionist, John LaMountain, began using balloons for the Federal government at Fort Monroe, near Hampton Roads, Virginia. The forerunner of today's aircraft carrier made an experimental debut on August 3, 1861, when LaMountain launched a balloon from the deck of the ship *Fanny*---which had been es-

In 1872 Great Eastern advertised itself as a "Circus and Balloon" show.

WAIT FOR THE MONSTER

OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY.

BY RAILROAD.

TRANSPORTED BY EXHIBITED UNDER

Seventy-Five CARS. Six Monster Tents.

EDWARDSVILLE JULY 29, 1872.

ONE TICKET THE ONLY

ADMITS YOU REALLY GREAT

TO THE SIX TENTS. ZOOLOGICAL TRIUMPH!

Great Eastern

MENAGERIE

MUSEUM, AVIARY,

CIRCUS AND BALLOON SHOW!



pecially outfitted for that purpose.

For many of these early balloonists, ascending into the ethers was not simply a dare devil stunt; it was a means of unraveling the science of flight—understanding the effects of air currents, the problems of elevation, the skill of navigation, and the evolution of balloon structure and building materials. But all this was expensive. By his own statement, Blanchard's first American flight, which required "4200 weight of vitriolic acid," which was needed for creating hydrogen, was paid for by his "aerial companions in Europe" at a cost of 100 guineas.⁸ And there were of course other expenses. The early solution for raising money was through ticket subscriptions. In Blanchard's case, although the entire population of Philadelphia, from 40,000 to 50,000 people, watched the ascension, the gate receipts totaled a mere \$405.⁹ The event was observed by nearly the whole of the city outside the prison walls.

It was ultimately discovered that ticket sales was not a feasible means of raising funds. Subsequent aeronauts found it was dangerous to disappoint audiences who had paid their money to see the balloon go up, bad weather being no excuse for cancellation. When a French aeronaut failed to ascend because the wind was close to hurricane level, the Philadelphia citizenry, who had paid to witness the event, broke up his aerial car for souvenirs, shredded his silken balloon, and burned the mansion from which grounds the flight was to be made. This illustrates the passion of curiosity balloon flights created in the last century. In addition, charging admission did not pay because it was too easy just to save the money and simply remain at a distance to watch. After all, the real enchantment was seeing the craft in the air, not air being pumped into it. Consequently, the best alternative was to find a sponsor to underwrite the exhibition—a civic celebration, agricultural fair, a commercial promotion, etc. With expenses paid for by the sponsoring organization, the ascension became a free act for the purpose of attracting an audience to an event other than solely the aeronautical feat.

Sometime in the 1820s at William Niblo's famous gar-



Rare photograph of the balloon used by the Barnum show in 1874.

den in New York City a Madame Blanchard was "wafted away to the azure vault above town in a balloon."¹⁰ Niblo's Garden was a fashionable evening resort where ice creams and other delicacies were served and nightly enter-

Newspaper ad used by Barnum telling of a balloon wedding in 1874.

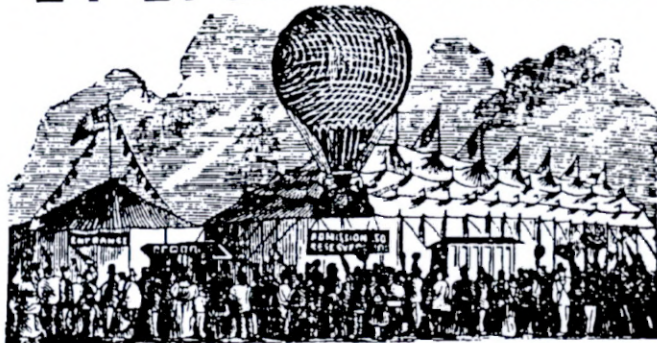
tainments—musical concerts, rope dancing, pyrotechnic displays and other such diversions—were offered. Was this intrepid lady the wife of Jean Pierre? Or was she an opportunist usurping the Blanchard name? Concurrently to her exhibitions, a man by the name of Robertson was ascending from the grounds of the rival Vauxhall Garden. It was said about that time that "a public garden without a balloon would be as great an anomaly as the theatre without an orchestra."¹¹ These incidents serve as examples of the direction aeronautic exhibitions had taken—an inducement for public congregation.

The balloon ascension became a daily attraction with circuses in the years following the war. The originator appears to be George W. DeHaven's (1837-1902) show of 1870. The practice began with no fanfare and seemingly no thought of it being innovative. The first reference to it in the *New York Clipper* read: "One of the aeronauts connected with DeHaven's Circus was recently severely injured by falling from the balloon into a summer house at Davenport, Iowa, and his substitute was drowned at Dubuque by falling in the river, we are informed."¹²

DeHaven moved about in Iowa, Illinois and Indiana that season. Then, at the end of July, R. E. J. Miles, a Cincinnati theatrical promoter, purchased the circus, which continued to function under the DeHaven banner. [I venture to remark that DeHaven's managerial history could be likened to a locomotive that halted with frequency to take on fuel.] The company traveled the Ohio River on their boat *Victor* until it reached Wheeling, when they transferred to moving on the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad. At this time it was announced: "A balloon ascension is now made daily in connection with the circus." And a correspondent writing from Camden, South Carolina, where the circus had been, referred to a free balloon ascension prior to the afternoon exhibition.¹³

Balloons for free acts caught on with other circus managers for the 1871 season. Agnes Lake's Hippo-Olympiad was mentioned in the *Clipper* early in January of that year as exhibiting a balloon ascension; but her show may have started the

POSITIVELY LAST WEEK! LAST WEEK! P. T. BARNUM'S



GREAT ROMAN HIPPODROME! CLOSES SATURDAY NIGHT, OCTOBER 24. LINCOLN PARK, AFTERNOON AND EVENING.

Grand Culmination of all the Great Races This Week—No Act Omitted—All the Brilliant Features of the Great New York Hippodrome reproduced at Each Exhibition.

BALLOON WEDDING ANNOUNCEMENT

Owing to the accident on Saturday—the first occurring in a long series of semi-weekly ascensions—the Balloon Wedding above the clouds is necessarily postponed until THIS (Monday) AFTERNOON. The Rev. H. B. Jeddrie, of Pittsburg, officiating clergyman, has kindly consented to remain, and all details will be carried out as per previous arrangement. The Ascension and Wedding will positively take place immediately upon the close of the regular afternoon entertainment. A parachute will be dropped from the Balloon at the conclusion of the marriage ceremony.

PRESS ASCENSION

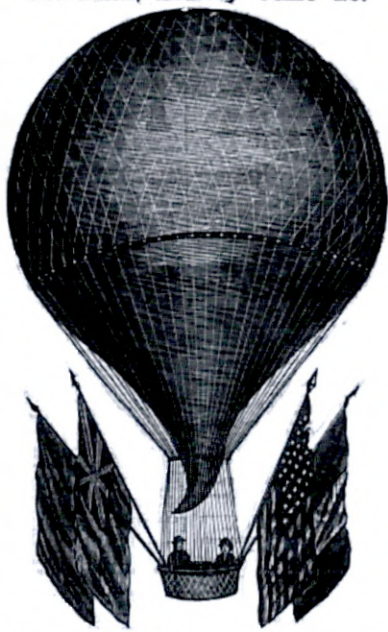
TUESDAY AFTERNOON, October 30th, when several members of the daily press will make a thrilling aerial voyage with Prof. Dunsinville. Doors open at 1:30 and 7 P. M. Entertainment commences at 2:30 and 8 P. M. respectively. Free admission granted to all who purchase Barnum's Great Book, written up to March, 1872. No. 1 ages, reduced from \$1.50 to \$1.00.

practice in late 1870. By that time, R. E. J. Miles had become managing director for Mrs. Lake, and George W. DeHaven was in advance of the show following the Miles/DeHaven seasonal closing. They apparently carried their propensity for balloon ascensions with them; for at 1:00 p.m. each day, or shortly before the start of Lake's matinee, Prof. J. W. Hayden fired up his equipment and went aloft.¹⁴ The show disbanded for the winter on February 24 at Atlanta, Georgia, and returned to Cincinnati to prepare for an April re-opening; but not before becoming the second circus to travel with an aeronaut as a free attraction.

G. G. Grady's Old Fashioned Circus began the practice in 1871 also. That is when the circus advertised balloon ascensionist Prof. Terries. This may have been either William or James Terries, both of whom were on the roster as acrobats.¹⁵ Wootten & Haight's Empire City Circus advertised a "Gratuitous Balloon Ascension, Adjoining the Circus Pavilion, at 1 o'clock p.m., prior to the arenic exhibition," with the so-called French aeronaut, Prof. Renno, piloting his monster ball. The ad claimed the circus had eight of these air ships 100 feet high and 60 feet in diameter which allowed them to give daily exhibitions. And finally, James Robinson's Circus, in this same year of 1871, featured the "Celebrated French Aeronaut," Mons. Paul LeGrand.

It appears to me that the early use of balloon ascensions with these companies was, at best, reckless. Unlike the professional flying of such men as Blanchard, Lowe, and LaMountain, the early circus ascensionists do not seem to be skilled aeronauts, but ambitious young men eager to turn a fast dollar, with invented French names and perhaps the added designation of "Professor." Josie DeMott, in the charming book about her life in the circus, characterizes the balloon ascension as "a trick performed by someone with more daring than intelligence." And of the aeronaut, she writes, "He was always nicknamed Ballooney, usually shortened to Looney."¹⁶ As such, the lives of these men were often shortened as well; or, for the more fortunate, filled with narrow escapes. While in Camilla, Georgia, on January 19, 1871, Lake's balloon caught fire as it began to ascend. The occupant escaped injury by swiftly bailing out at an altitude of a mere thirty-five feet.¹⁷ In Dayton, Ohio on April 21 of that year, just previous to the send-off of G. G. Grady's aeronaut, Terries, who performed on a trapeze bar, the balloon caught fire near its mouth and con-

SUCCESS OF THE PERIOD!
MASSIVE COMBINATION.
The Grandest Enterprise of the Century!
Great Mammoth
EMPIRE CITY CIRCUS
ENAGERIE AND BALLOON.
At Bath, Friday June 16.



Gratuitous Balloon Ascension
Adjoining the Circus Pavilion, at 1 o'clock P. M., prior to the Arenic Exhibition.
Prof. RENNO, the renowned French Aeronaut, will make one of his aerial flights in his monster ball on TUESDAY, June 19th, at 1 o'clock, in the presence of the public. He will ascend at 1 o'clock, and will remain aloft for one hour, and will descend at 2 o'clock. He will be accompanied by his assistant, and will be seen by the public. He will be seen by the public. He will be seen by the public.
Two Performing Dens of Living Wild Animals,

This 1871 Empire City Circus ad told of a "Gratuitous balloon ascension" in 1871.

tinued to burn as it rose from the ground. When the air within the bag cooled, the aeronaut descended rapidly but fortunately was able to break the force of his fall by grasping onto a branch of a willow tree. A sprained ankle was his only souvenir.¹⁸ Again in July, when Lake's Hippo-Olympiad was returning from a tour of the West, the *Saline County Journal* of Salina, Kansas, opined: "The balloon ascension was not the greatest success in the world. The balloon ascended but Prof. Miles didn't, and thus was our special artist deprived of a visit to the stars. The parachute must have been indisposed, for the balloon seemed to shoot off before there was a good ready. The 'ship of air' turned a complete somersault after going up a few feet, and caught fire. The fire was speedily extinguished; so was the balloon."¹⁹

The aeronaut for James Robinson, while exhibiting in Louisville, Kentucky, on July 12, 1871, had a collapse of the balloon which rapidly fell earthward but, fortunately, the craft landed on a rooftop without damage to its passenger.²⁰ Prof. Fisher of G. G. Grady's

circus, who had replaced Terries for a reason to be explained later, was lucky during the Pittsburgh stand on August 3, 1871, when, after attaining some 500 feet of altitude, his balloon suddenly dropped and doused him into the Allegheny River, wherein he swam to a nearby sailboat, safe and uninjured.²¹ Again, with James Robinson, in Cincinnati on July 17th, the balloon repeated its erratic behavior, forcing the aeronaut to dive through a friendly second story window of a picture frame factory to safety, which sounds like a spectacular feat in itself. The *Clipper* reporter suggested: "These ascensions with hot air are fool hardy. The man risks his neck every time he goes up."²² Press agent and circus historian, Charles H. Day, has suggested that Stone & Murray used hot air balloons in the early 1870s but abandoned the scheme on account of the frequent accidents to aeronauts and the innumerable bills for damages from the descent of the balloon.²³

These accidents merely delayed the inevitable. A *Clipper* obituary revealed that a Leonardi Torres, who must have been the Terries previously mentioned, a man of about twenty-eight years of age, died on July 22, 1871, making a balloon ascension for G. G. Grady's circus in Massillon, Ohio. While performing aloft on a trapeze, he let loose his grasp to prevent being smothered by the balloon exhaust and fell into the water-filled Ohio Canal, some eight or nine feet deep. Tragically, his feet lodged in the mud at the canal bottom, causing him to drown.²⁴ Professor Atkins, a twenty year old from Toledo, Ohio, lost his life while with Mike Lipman's circus at Decatur, Alabama, on May 27, 1872. As he was about to go aloft, he remarked apprehensively, "This is the last ascension I'll ever make." And it was. The balloon plummeted into the Tennessee River from a height of about a half-mile and the young man drowned.²⁵

Whereas the serious aeronauts of the past had been knowledgeable and precise about their use and preparation of balloons, circuses were far less careful. Instead of using a contemporary system of filling the balloon with hydrogen, they kept to the more primitive and less expensive means of hot air. The inflation process commenced at about a half-hour before send-off when hot air was created by the generation of heat from a temporary furnace built into the ground. When the moment came to ascend, the starter gave the signal and the aeronaut lifted off, usually clinging to a trapeze bar fastened to the balloon.

Once aloft, the air voyager was followed on the ground by a man with horse and rig, so that after he alighted he could be swiftly returned to the show lot to relate his perilous journey to the assembled crowd and sell his photographs. With hydrogen, the buoyancy of the balloon could be controlled through careful release of the gas. With hot air, the speed of descent was proportionate to the time it took for the air within the balloon cavity to cool. If conditions were such that it cooled rapidly, the balloon could plummet to the ground at a dangerous pace. This would account for the repeated accidents.

This brings us to the ultimate question: why did circuses make use of balloon ascensions at this particular time? There is no single answer. A logical one was posed by Bob Parkinson in his 1961 *Bandwagon* article, "Circus Balloon Ascensions." He suggested that the sensational escape from Paris by Leon Gambetta while the city was under siege in October of 1870, during the Franco-Prussian War, which was romanticized through newspaper accounts and illustrated weeklies, influenced circus proprietors to take advantage of the public interest over the event.²⁶ Still, that does not account for DeHaven's introduction of the balloon ascension, which occurred some months earlier. Certainly the Civil War balloonists contributed a share toward creating public interest, even though they saw limited use and were in operation for only a short period of time.

To me there is a more compelling reason. All of the circuses previously mentioned, the ones using the balloon ascension for a free act during 1870 and 1871, were either rail or boat shows or both. The years from 1850 to 1870 was a period during which there were increased attempts at rail transportation by circuses, as added rail mileage made it easier to fill their dates. Still, these endeavors were not fully successful.

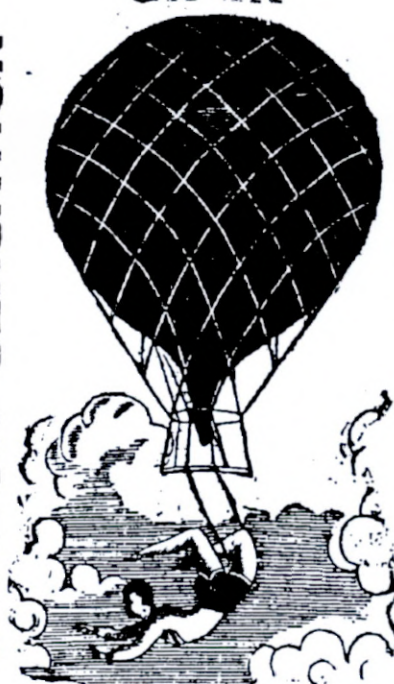
Fred Dahlinger, Jr., in his study of the early railroad circuses, developed some interesting ideas that apply here. He designated the turning point for the railroad circus as being in 1872 when P. T. Barnum's Museum, Menagerie, Caravan and Hippodrome successfully adopted rail travel through a system of loading and unloading the wagons from special flat cars and developing a more proficient means of railroad routing. Circuses prior to 1872 loaded onto box cars and generally hired local drays or used a form of

One Day Galy — Afternoon
and Evening.

Pullman & Hamilton's

GREAT

LONDON SENSATION



AND FIELD MUSEUM.

Will exhibit on the Fair Ground,
at Guelph,

On Saturday, the 14th July,

In 1877 Pullman & Hamilton used a balloon ascension as a free act.

"knockdown" wagon to carry the equipment from lot to rail siding, because the enclosed boxcars disallowed the transporting of regular baggage stock. In addition, the railroad system was still not fully developed to efficiently handle show movement. The upshot being, as Dahlinger described it: "The circus' inability to exploit rail travel coupled with the railroad system's lack of development caused showmen to downsize their shows to a level which could survive under these restrictive conditions. Virtually everything which was not necessary to house and execute the performance in the big top was eliminated, including the parade, the menagerie and the museum or sideshow. This self-imposed downsizing led to the popular conception that the rail show delivered less for the price of admission than the overland circus."²⁷

The balloon ascension at this early stage, then, was a substitute for the parade and menagerie with shows traveling by rail or boat in an attempt to compete with the innumerable wagon shows

on the road following the war. As we have mentioned, DeHaven's circus moved principally by boat and rail. The others, the Empire City Circus of Wootton and Haight, Lake's Hippo-Olympiad, and James Robinson's Champion Circus all traveled by rail at the time they first adopted the balloon ascension as a free act. According to the *Clipper*, the Empire City Circus "did not make any display," meaning no parade.²⁸

During May and June, G. G. Grady's circus traveled by steamer throughout Michigan, ending up at Chicago for the July 4th celebrations. From there they took to the rails for July and August. When Grady gave six exhibitions in Pittsburgh beginning July 31, 1871, a correspondent found the balloon ascension to be the greatest attraction with the company. "This is always a free exhibition and thousands of people witnessed it in Pittsburgh . . . Grady didn't take much 'stock' in street parades. His band, mounted on horseback, and a clown in ring costume, also on horseback, constituted the daily procession."²⁹ Of the James Robinson Circus, the *Clipper* confirmed: "The company travel by rail, so do not pretend to give a gorgeous street procession, but have an outside feature in the shape of a balloon ascension which is connected with the hot air plan."³⁰ The parade of the Hippo-Olympiad, traveling from the West by rail, was limited to a bandwagon circulating through the streets.³¹

Although the balloon ascension did not supplant the parade or the menagerie or side show, it appears to have been a useful substitute for the managers before the Barnum show opened the door to serious rail travel. And public fascination with circus balloon ascensions existed for another fifty years. The risk to human life was an aspect that made viewing more exciting, an occasional fatality to the aeronaut serving as an added feature to a spectacle that otherwise offered little in the way of variety. Still, the magic of being lifted into the air, defying the law of gravity, moving into what appears to be endless space, is a fulfillment of childhood fantasy. Today the aeronaut has been replaced by the astronaut. The public is still fascinated.

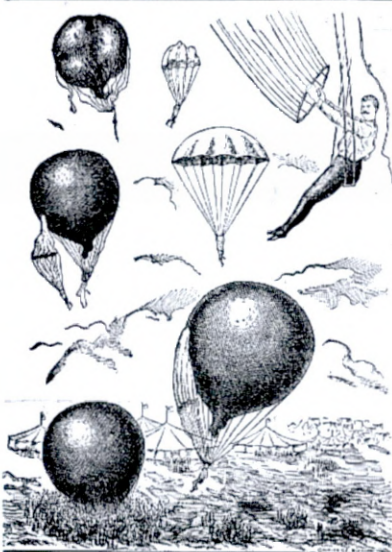
Who can say? Perhaps some day circuses will pitch their tents on Mars.

NOTES

1. John F. Polacek, "The Origin of the Extravaganza," *Bandwagon*, November-December, 1973, pp. 28-30.

2. Jean Pierre Blanchard, *The First Air*

A LEAP FOR LIFE FROM A MONSTER AIR-SHIP



... FROM FEARFUL AND
IMMEASURABLE HEIGHTS

Illustration from an 1889 Stowe & Long Circus herald. Pfening Archives.

Voyage in America (published by the Penn Mutual Life Insurance Co., Philadelphia 1943), p. 10.

3. Kurt R. Stehling and William Beller, *Skyhooks* (New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1962), pp. 20-24.

4. Blanchard, *op. cit.*, p. 49.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 52.

6. Charles Durang (partly compiled from the papers of his father, John Durang; with notes by the editors), "The History of the Philadelphia Stage Between the Years 1749 and 1855," serialized in the *Philadelphia Sunday Dispatch*, 1854-1860, Part I, Chapter XXIII, pp. 44-45, microfilm.

7. *Cincinnati Daily Enquirer*, April 24, 1853; May 5, 1853.

8. Blanchard, *op. cit.*, p. 46.

9. *Ibid.*, p. 45.

10. Col. Tom Picton (edited by William L. Slout), *Old Gotham Theatricals* (San Bernardino, CA: The Borgo Press, 1995), p. 16.

11. Col. Tom Picton (edited by William L. Slout), *Fun and Fancy in Old New York* (San Bernardino, CA: The Borgo Press, 1995).

12. *New York Clipper*, June 18, 1870, p. 87.

13. *New York Clipper*, August 6, 1870, p. 143; September 3, 1870, p. 175; October 22, 1870, p. 231.

14. *New York Clipper*, January 14, 1871, p. 327.

15. *Ibid.*, p. 11.

16. Josephine DeMott Robinson, *The Circus Lady*, pp. 81-82.

17. *New York Clipper*, February 4, 1871, p. 351.

18. *New York Clipper*, May 6, 1871, p. 39.

19. King, Orin C., "Only Big Show Coming," Part Two, *Bandwagon*, July-August, 1987, p. 42.

20. *New York Clipper*, July 22, 1871, p. 127.

21. *New York Clipper*, August 12, 1871, p. 151.

22. *New York Clipper*, July 29, 1871, p. 135.

23. Charles H. Day, "History of American Circus and Tented Exhibitions," *Billboard*, January 5, 1907, p. 20.

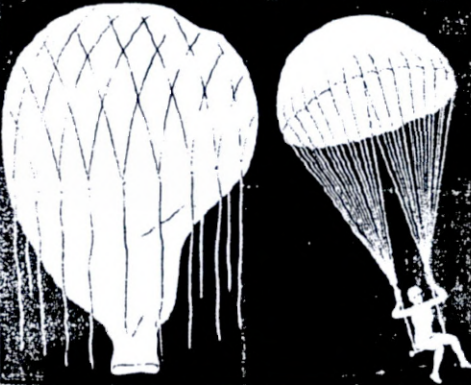
24. *New York Clipper*, August 5, 1871, p. 143.

25. Even for skilled acrobats, balloon performing was dangerous and frequently deadly. Washington Harrison Donaldson (1840-1875) was the victim of one of the most famous balloon tragedies. A native Philadelphian and son of an alderman in that city, he was as a child fond of sports and eventually was proficient at balancing on a ladder, walking the tight-rope, etc. Subsequently, he became interested in aeronautics and performing on a trapeze suspended from a balloon. While in Philadelphia, Broad and Norris Streets, he ascended in a small one-man craft, which became unmanageable and descended near Atco, New Jersey. Three telegrams were sent to Philadelphia, stating that Donaldson had fallen from a great height and been killed, which created quite a sensation, all made plausible by the signature of "J. M. Spencer, M.D." Shortly, other telegrams announced that Donaldson was alive. It later came out that he had sent the telegrams himself and that losing the balloon was a pre-arranged publicity stunt. This came to the attention of P. T. Barnum, who, perhaps out of a feeling of kinship for a fellow "humbucker," hired the young aeronaut.

Donaldson made his last and most famous flight for Barnum's circus in Chicago, when on July 15, 1875, he disappeared over Lake Michigan. After ascending in a tattered balloon used for the free act, he was carried out over the lake and wrecked. Both Donaldson and Greenwood (or Grimwood), a reporter for a Chicago newspaper, were assumed to have perished in the water. The following day, David S. Thomas, the show's press agent, assumed the role of aeronaut and made an ascension himself. It later came out that as an amateur he had previously been involved in some thirty-four trips aloft. The newspaper man's body washed ashore some weeks later. The remains of Donaldson were never recovered.

There were others in the profession, however, on whom Fortune cast a more benevolent spell. Silas M. Brooks was one. He entered the entertainment business in 1848 when engaged by Barnum to form a Druid band. He manufactured crude horn instruments and grotesque costumes and created a successful act. Later, he organized a circus of his own, featuring a balloon ascension. When, his aeronaut, a man named Paulin, was taken ill, Brooks donned the aeronaut's garb and completed the scheduled flight. Finding the others to his liking, he continued in that capacity and accrued a fortune. Where it all went is unexplained, for he died

KING BROS. AND CRISTIANI CIRCUS



FREE ON SHOW GROUNDS AT 1 P. M.
GRAND BALLOON ASCENSION

**3000 FT. PARACHUTE JUMP
BY THE GREAT SKYLO**

Poster used by the King Bros.-Cristiani Circus in 1952. Circus World Museum collection.

in the poor house in Collinsville, Connecticut, on April 7, 1906.

August Buislay (1847-1911), the most prominent member of the Buislay Family, came to California from France and started a small, one-ring circus. As gymnasts and antipodean artists, the group featured feats of the "Spiral Mountain" and the "Niagara Leap." When the first gas filled balloons came into vogue, August, an intrepid trapeze performer, began making ascensions and ultimately parachuting from the floating air bubble.

Prof. Samuel A. King (1828-1914) was another of the 19th century ascensionist who managed to stay alive in the profession. He was present at the Philadelphia Centennial Exhibition in 1876 and later traveled with Barnum & Bailey. When, during the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago, he took a woman passenger aloft, the balloon was blown out over Lake Michigan and both were given up as lost. A revenue cutter was sent to find their remains, but before the boat returned the professor landed his craft safely on solid Chicago soil. He lived to die another day—in Philadelphia from heart failure at the age of 86.

26. Bob Parkinson, "Circus Balloon Ascensions," *Bandwagon*, March-April, 1961, p. 4-5.

27. Fred Dahlinger, Jr., "The development of the Railroad Circus," Part One, *Bandwagon*, November-December, 1983, pp. 6-7.

28. *New York Clipper*, May 27, 1871, p. 62.

29. *New York Clipper*, August 12, 1871, p. 151.

30. *New York Clipper*, September 2, 1871, p. 175.

31. King, *op. cit.*, p. 35.

The Cookhouse in the Roaring Twenties

I could never find the correct answer to three questions after more than fifty years under the white tops.

First, why was the workingmen's side of the Ringling dining tent called the long end?

Second, why was the performers' side of the dining tent always called the short end?

Third, why did the meal flag flown atop the cook house always have the name HOTEL in huge block letters on the flag?

The following answers are my own guess work, so correct me if I am wrong.

In years past the tables for the workingmen were in long rows of six or seven lengths of tables, lapped upon each other, each row would seat 72 to 80 men. There were five long rows of tables.

Also in the distant past the performers side of the dining tent had all single lengths of tables. Seating twelve people at each table, they were also in rows, but not connected. So it was the short end of tables.

The hotel flag had its origin on the old Ringling circus, probably around the turn of the century. When I was on the Ringling circus in 1918, it was flying in the breeze each and every day. Since then, the hotel flag was always the center of attention of all Ringling employees until the closing in Pittsburgh in 1956. Being the cook house steward that year I asked my assistant to give me the hotel flag at the end of the last meal under canvas. The meal flag has a prominent space in my rum-pus room.

I know for sure that the bunk house and dining room at the Ringling Bros. winter quarters in Baraboo, Wisconsin had been called Hotel Ringling for more years than people whom I have asked have any knowledge.

Probably young Alfred "Ollie" Webb, the genial cook house steward, liked the name "HOTEL" when he first joined the Ringling show around the turn of the century and had used that name for his meal flag until the end of the outdoor tour under canvas.

After being the head waiter of the workingmen's side of the dining tent over the years, I day dream about the hectic years of the past and wonder how we ever kept up

THE CIRCUS STEWARD

Part VII

By John M. Staley

the pace, day after day, year after year.

In those days the pay was meager and unless you had a racket you were out of luck. I believe the men under me were earning the huge sum of four dollars and sixty five cents a week. I could never understand the way they always had those odd nickels instead of even money, as there was no withholding taxes in those years. Thinking about the weekly pay, I was only getting around twenty four dollars and some odd nickels.

It seemed the cook house men and the train porters were on the bottom of the totem pole when it came to wages.

The cook house department employed around one hundred and twenty men. This number would rise and fall due to the coming and going of help. The waiters on the performers' side of the dining tent were good and steady men; most of them came back year after year. In those days you were not called an old timer unless you had at least ten years under your belt. Some of the waiters had thirty or more years in the cook house. Yours truly had better than twenty five years before venturing out on my own as a cook house steward.

I operated cook houses on all the major circuses for the next twenty years. I was at the helm as cook house steward on Russell Bros. Pan Pacific, Clyde Beatty, Sparks, Cole Bros., Al G. Kelly & Miller Bros., and Clyde Beatty-Cole Bros. Then I went back to my alma mater, the Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus.

A lowered "HOTEL" flag indicating that a meal was not being served. Bob MacDougall collection.

In between those golden years I operated three dining cars, or in circus lingo, "pie cars" on the Beckmann & Gerety, Royal American and James Strates shows, all major railroad carnivals. Then I finally ended up on the "pie car" on the Ringling-Barnum circus.

I have already mentioned the short end waiters, but omitted something that might be of interest. Herbert Weaver was in charge of the commissary wagon where show personnel could buy a needle or a suit of clothes. In his spare time he was book and time keeper for the eight hundred workingmen. Weaver would save the pay checks for any man who wanted to have get-away money when the circus closed in the fall. A majority of the waiters would turn their checks back into the commissary wagon. Two weeks before the circus closed all of the men who had checks in the wagon would have to take them to the red ticket and office wagon to have them cashed.

Weaver was all business and should a man want to have two or three checks from his savings he would give the man all his checks and would not save another check until the next year. In all the years I never heard one man complain of a missed check or any shortage. The Ringlings were always noted for paying their employees promptly, always encouraging men to save money for that rainy day.

Now we will pass into my little world, which was the workingmen's end the dining tent. This was a different set up from the performers. Of the forty-eight men on my pay roll I would feel lucky to have eighteen to twenty-five men who started out in the spring finish the season. Those figures do not sound out of line, but during the seven months or eight months of the circus season I would have a turnover from two hundred to six hundred men in some years.

During my regime as head waiter none of my steady men would ever want to be a waiter on the short side. Unless you knew that the workingmen were good tipppers, it would seem odd.

My waiters and coffee boy on the bosses, assistant bosses, blacksmiths and train porters tables all made good tips each week, better than some of the ta-



knew that the workingmen were good tipplers, it would seem odd.

My waiters and coffee boy on the bosses, assistant bosses, blacksmiths and train porters tables all made good tips each week, better than some of the tables on the short side. My head coffee boy on the long tables for the workingmen had five men to help pour coffee. Each of the five men would use a six quart coffee pitcher. These men only had white coffee, that is coffee with milk added. The head coffee boy poured only black coffee. To get black coffee at each meal you had to give him at least a quarter in advance each week. There were better than six hundred men at each meal, so the least he would collect each week was around \$50.

During the hot weather months the head coffee boy would make lemonade for his customers. He still served black coffee and the five men would serve white coffee and ice tea. During those hot months the head coffee boy would draw at least \$100 each day. He gave me one third and split the remaining money with his five men.

My dessert man had the top money job. He had one helper for mornings and two for dinner. At breakfast the two men served hot cakes or French toast. The dessert man would serve all the long tables while his helper would bring in trays of hot cakes from the kitchen. If his customers wanted seconds or thirds all they had to do was ask.

At lunch there were puddings of all sorts. Dinner was the big meal and he would either have sheet cake or pies. When in season they would have strawberry short cake, watermelons and cantaloupes. He did all the serving. The two helpers would tote in the loaded trays. His take each week would average \$125 to \$175. This may sound high, but you must remember he received fifty cents or better from his customers. It was always cash before any seconds or thirds. He would give me one third, one third to the maker and one third to himself and his helper.

My cereal man also had a helper. They would serve the bowls of cereal to the long tables of workingmen. Corn flakes or



The baker and his assistants preparing dessert at one of the ovens. Pfening Archives.

Wheaties were served about four times each week. At times I would slice bananas on top. Oat meal was served two mornings and cream of wheat or corn meal perhaps once a week. The same procedure was repeated, with anyone wanting extra cereal paying each week in advance. He would give me one third, the remaining to himself and his helper.

My bread and butter man took care of the long tables. There was no butter; it was oleomargarine. At each meal he would carry a large enamel bucket with oleo to replace what had been used on the table. In the center of his bucket he had a smaller container that was filled with real butter. Breakfast was his big meal with hot cakes or French toast. He gave me half and kept the other half. Now you can understand why I kept my key men year after year.

The Ringling Bros. Circus has always

The No. 104 commissary wagon was new in 1951. It remained on the show during the 1956 season when Staley was in charge of the cookhouse. Pfening Archives.



been known as "the Sunday school show," but there were rackets among the different departments, although the management tried to hold them down.

They even had money lenders in some of the larger working departments.

The cook house was no exception. My money loaner had the "x" on the entire cook house. He had been told not to lend money to any other department. They all charged the same amount

of interest. The going rate was twenty five cents on each dollar, each Saturday, that being the pay day for the workingmen.

For example, if a man borrowed four dollars any day of the week including pay day he would have to pay back five dollars, even if he only used the money one day. Should he borrow ten dollars the following week on Saturday he would pay twelve dollars and fifty cents. If on Saturday he did not have the full amount he could pay the interest and let the principal ride until the next Saturday. This could go on for weeks.

We had two things in our favor. Herbert Weaver was the timekeeper for the workingmen and also a good friend of mine. Number two, there were only two ways we could lose money. The borrower could either walk away, leaving his pay behind or drop dead. In later years some of the men got too smart. When they decided to quit they would buy supplies out of the commissary wagon, then borrow money from the loaners and walk away. In those days the workingmen had the first week of their pay held back. This was called a hold back. Another advantage over the other money loaners

was that when I paid off or the man quit I would find out if he owed any money. If he did I would write the amount in ink on the pink slip. Then Weaver would add that amount to what the man owed in the commissary wagon. He would then take his pay off slip to the red ticket and office wagon for his money that was due.

In later years the management put on full time timekeepers, relieving Weaver of that heavy load. The time keepers had their

office the front part of the yellow grandstand ticket wagon. Even at that we had the same protection from loss. At the end of each season we would give the time keeper a nice going away present.

It seems all showmen are gamblers at heart, from the lowly workingman to the high officials, including performers. Any time the circus was in a town or city for more than one day all sorts of games would pop up, mostly crap and poker games, in the colored dining tent there could be a "skin" or a crap game going full blast.

In the long end we never had much time to gamble until after dinner and everything was ready for breakfast the next morning. Over the years we had some long poker games. I never will forget one poker game that started on a Sunday night and lasted to Tuesday afternoon. I had to break up the game as they were serving the last meal and had started to pack up the odd equipment as we were moving out to the next town. The players were not all cook house men; the game was open to anyone on the circus. We never allowed any town folks at any game. Should there be any of my men playing they did not have to worry about the meals being served. We would always serve plenty of coffee and sandwiches during the game, but never any hard liquor or beer. I always had two game keepers on hand for relief. I had another man to run the crap game. The poker game always returned a better "cut" for it was more steady than the crap game and always lasted longer. The crap game was a fast turn over, but it never lasted more than three or four hours. It seemed that some one would always get a "hot" hand and break the game.

I never allowed my men to take any advantages in either game. Should the games last for any length of time the money would turn up with the game keeper. Most every Saturday afternoon I would have a crap game on the dishwashers' table behind the curtain. When the men came back from the red ticket wagon with their pay, it would only last a short time as we would break it up when it was time to get ready for dinner. We always divided the "cut" money down the middle. I knew they had first count, but I was always satisfied.

Believe it or not the big show had more crap games going at times than in Reno. For example there was al-



Chef Steve and his assistants at the salad table. Pfening Archives.

ways a big game on the performers' pay day. Every moving night there were one or more crap games near the runs or sleeping cars. Many a time they would still be shooting craps as one of the circus sections were being "hooked," ready to leave town. Often the game keeper and lantern man would have to pick their blanket, dice and money and make a run for either the flat cars or coaches. Sometimes the train would pull out too fast and leave some of the men behind.

There were crap games in the menagerie, side show and the big top between shows, besides small games at times in the harness shop, the candy butchers' top, and in some of the baggage wagons around the lot.

Here again the cook house money lender came into the picture. The nights that any games were in progress he would wander from one game to the other, never once failing to get customers, as someone had to lose, and someone had to win. So the game keeper always came out ahead. Some of the losers did not want to give up their seat as they knew they would get lucky before the game broke up. I have known men to borrow back the same amount of money two or more times during the night, paying back each time the principal and interest. This happened more in the colored dining tent.

At one time in my career I used my rest tent as a "blue room." The head waiters on both the long end and the short end had their rest tents, and they were sometimes used as gaming locations. I put one of my dependable men in charge of the beer room. It might sound strange, but the circus paid him a salary, then I gave him twenty-five to thirty-five dollars each week. Some days we might only get rid of ten to twelve cases of bottled beer, other days it might hit forty. The going price was fifteen

cents a bottle. I never allowed a bottle to leave the tent and made sure they did not bring a bottle into the dining tent. That money was all mine, except what I paid the bartender. I was only raided one time during the entire season.

It seemed the general manager of the circus that year did not like the idea of a "blue room" on his circus. We were down in Texas one day when a man from the front door of the circus came over to the cook house and told me that shortly I

would have a visit from the state troopers to knock off the "blue room." It did not take any time to have my men tote all the beer into woods nearby while others were tearing down my rest tent and loading all the equipment into different wagons. When the state troopers arrived at the cook house they did not say why they were there nor did anyone ask them what they wanted. Looking around they spied Ollie Webb's private office tent, which was near the kitchen. Webb always had a large box in his tent behind the curtain. That made it sort of private and kept people from staring into the tent. There were folding canvas chairs, a folding cot that was always made up whether he was on the lot or not, a wash stand with towels, a pail always full of water, another pail kept full of ice. The top drawer of the box contained an assortment of liquors for his cronies when they wanted a pick up or had friends visiting. The troopers were sure it was my tent. Funny, they did not find one bottle of beer in the box, but they did take all the liquor as evidence.

Webb had gone ahead that morning to do his buying in a distant town and would meet the show the following day. Sure enough Ollie was on the lot waiting for us. Someone must of told him what had happened. When he arrived on the lot the first thing he did after his office tent was all set was to open the blue box and see for himself how much of his private stock had been taken by the troopers. None of us in the cook house really heard what he said to the general manager that day. But reports in a roundabout way did reach us. Webb was indeed hot as a pistol and told the G. M. in so many words and said if there was a next time to let him know and he would take care of his own department.

Let's move on to the large kitchen which was staffed with a chef and twenty three men. The chef had about

fifteen large milk cans that were always kept in the top of the water wagon. All the fat from the cooking of bacon and link sausage was put into these cans. When enough were filled he would have someone contact the local grease and bone man. They would fry off better than six hundred pounds of bacon or sausage for breakfast each morning for breakfast, not counting the lard used to fry French toast about three times a week in deep pans atop the ranges. It amounted to a nice piece of money. Whenever the circus was in a city more than one day the chef would put a night watchman in the kitchen to feed all the different night watchmen from all the departments. This man would also pan up the sausage, bacon, ham or pork chops for the breakfast the next morning. Around four thirty in the morning he would start to fire up the ten wood burning stoves.

All show hands are great coffee drinkers, so the kitchen was a mecca for the stay awakes. They would come in at all hours of the night, buying coffee or sandwiches and dessert. Should there be no meat left over from supper all the night watchman had to do was unlock one of the ice boxes and bring out some cold meat and cheese. While the side show folks were awaiting the blow off of the night performance of the big show the night cook would send over a tray of sandwiches and a pitcher or two of coffee. All money collected was split between the chef and the night cook.

The boiler man also had money on the side. He would sell hot water to anyone wanting a bucket. Should the cook house be near the big top he would have a field day of dishing out hot water to the folks in the dressing room. Cook house men did not have to pay for hot water.

Next we come to the butcher shop. The butcher would keep a stock pile of hot dogs in his ice box for the concession department as they did not have any ice box, except a small one in the grease joint. The butcher received a sum of money each week for this.

Now we move to the grocery wagon. For a stipulation the man in charge would issue jams and other condiments to the performers waiters for their tables.

A majority of the waiters ushered both performances in the big top. They had the short side or star back seats,

which had a folding back rest and a foot rest. The band stand and the entrance and exit for all the acts separated the star backs. These seats were cheaper than the grandstand reserved seats. The ushers made good money working with the ticket sellers on the hippodrome track. They also high seated the patrons in the general admission bleachers. As soon as the circus performance started the cook house men would come back to the dining tent. The short end in those days had a dish washing table same as in the long end, so it was nothing flat until they had a crap game going full force, trying to win the other guy's ill earned money. Rest assured the game was always "cut." One of the men would bring out tip boards every so often and would use six or eight boards at each session, depending on how much money was floating around. Besides the crap game, which was almost every afternoon, the men played a lot of black jack or twenty one. The deal was always passed after each black jack. Each deal was "cut."

As mentioned before the waiters on the performers' side of the dining tent were given tips for service rendered in additional to their salary. Some tables were good tippers while others were darn bad. Here again they also had coffee boys as on the workingmens' tables. They each had their own row of tables, but they grossed more tips separately than all the coffee boys put together on the long end. The lowest coffee boy would drag in better than one hundred dollars each week.

As in any other department the cook house men had to pay somebody. The waiters had to pay the sleeping car porters one or two dollars a week for service. If the porters brought rain gear

The Ringling-Barnum dining staff ready for the noon meal in the 1940s. Pfening Archives.



to the lot it was another dollar. And there was more. To the head waiter for linen and wash up, one dollar. To the steam table man, one or two dollars; to the baker, one or two dollars; for extra desserts to the bread and butter man, one dollar. All bread in those years was sliced by hand. For the tip he would take care of your tables. They paid the dishwasher one dollar to bring a bucket of hot water to your table at the start of each meal. To the grocery man you paid for what you wanted for the table. It was like the old saying "take from Peter to pay Paul."

Wheaties Before It Became the Breakfast of Champions

In the past years I have attempted to piece together this amusing anecdote that occurred on the Ringling-Barnum Circus during the season of 1934. Wanting to be sure that my dates were authenticated by some other person, I wrote to General Mills in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

A letter was received from a Mr. Paxton of the big "G" division. He gave me all the information that was needed to put my story in print.

Wheaties had been introduced in January of 1925. At that time there was only one size package, an eight ounce box, packed 24 packages to a case. In January 1934 Wheaties introduced a coupon for Wm. Rogers & Son which consumers could exchange for silverware.

I was head waiter on the workingmens' side of the mammoth dining tent that year. At that time we were feeding better than 800 men at each meal. This included bosses, assistants, blacksmiths, tractor drivers and Pullman porters.

These were the depression years. Most of the working departments had more men than were needed. For example I would have more men working just for their food than I had on the pay roll. They were always hopeful that someone would quit or be fired, so that they could get a berth in the sleeping cars. The extra help slept any place on the flat cars that was handy.

The number of circus personnel in 1934 was the largest up to that time. It was between 1,200 and 1,300. The workingmen were coming and going all the time. One day the count would be light. The next it would hit the top. Ollie

Webb was cook house steward. He was the best steward in show business and major domo of the commissary department. He did all his own buying and planned all the meals. He had a crew of one hundred and twenty five men.

In my department I had man cereal man who served all cereals. He had a helper to fill the bowls with cereal and milk. While one man was passing out the cereal at the long tables the helper would be filling the large trays with bowls to be filled. When we had sliced bananas on top of the corn flakes I would give the cereal man two or three men to help peel and slice the bananas. The head cereal man would always have at least one full case of corn flakes to start. Later I would send a man to the grocery wagon for more. The cereal man made good tips each week from the working men for extra bowls of corn flakes. Some of the men would make a meal on corn flakes, having two or three bowls.

One morning I noticed we had something different, Wheaties. That morning we had sliced bananas, so curious me picked up a bowl and meandered to one of the bosses tables and tried out the new cereal. They tasted good after having corn flakes so often and so many years.

After breakfast had been served and all the long tables were reset for dinner, we never called the noon meal lunch, the cereal man came to my rest tent and handed me a large stack of coupons from the Wheaties boxes. At the time I was too busy shaving to look at the coupons. When I later read the instructions I thought it would not take me long to obtain a complete set of silverware free, providing I could talk the old man into buying Wheaties. It has been a long time, but I think for a certain number of coupons, plus some cash and you received a piece of silverware. In any case we bought Wheaties and by the end of the season I had full set of silverware.

The Old Time Circus Cook House

The first of the four trains of the Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus was known as the "flying squadron." In years past, except for some unscheduled delay, you could almost tell what time of night it was when the first section pulled away from the railroad crossing. It would be



The smoke stacks for the Quad ranges projecting out from under the cooking tent in 1932.

10:30 P. M., give a few minutes one way or the other.

It carried the wagons for the dining tent and commissary, the tents for the baggage stock or draft horses, blacksmith and harness shop, the large menagerie tent, and all the cages of wild animals with the doors closed and a canvas tarpaulin tied down on all sides to keep the animals warm and dry. Also included were sleeping cars to transport the men who were needed in each department as well stock cars for the work horses.

From the time the first of the eight wagons that comprised the cook house, arrived on the lot it was only an hour or so before they would be hauling up the Ringling "Hotel" flag and breakfast would be in full force.

The Quad Ranges

During the twenties we had ten to twelve wood stoves that were manufactured by the Quad Range Company of Cleveland, Ohio. The ranges were in units of two and needed only one smoke stack. The stoves were set on light weight steel rails on the ground. The stoves themselves were light weight, four men having no trouble in carrying them to the wagon or back to the kitchen. I could have a blast furnace fire in the stove up until the last minute, then throw a bucket of water on the burning wood, pull out the charred wood and ashes, then another bucket of water and the stove was ready to load in the wagon. The stoves were made to last under the harsh treatment that occurred daily in the circus kitchen. Very seldomly did one of the ranges give any trouble or warp. The wood was purchased by the twenty four hour man and was already on the lot when we arrived to lay out the

cook house and kitchen. Some days either the 24 hour man or the wood and coal man would spot the pile of wood where one of the wagons was to be spotted. As soon as the cook house was laid out we would get all the men together, make a wood line and pass each piece of wood to where it should be. Other times we would tote the wood, which was faster.

Fried Eggs

In all my years in the Ringling-Barnum cook house I could never understand the iron clad rules that Ollie Webb imposed on eggs. It was the cheapest food on the breakfast menu. When scrambled eggs were served all the personnel could have all they cared to eat.

But when they served "ups and overs" the workingmen were allowed three eggs along with either bacon or sausage. I never realized the amount of work that was attached to an "up and over" breakfast until I became the head waiter on the long end of the huge dining tent.

As the men filed in they would go to the farthest end of the long tables that sat 84 men at each table. The head waiter would start at the far end. As each waiter, carrying five plates of eggs from the kitchen, would serve the seated men in front of the head waiter, he would proceed up the aisle as each man was served. His assistant or "pusher" stayed in the back watching that none of the "second" waiters would slip in a fresh plate of eggs. The second waiters only served the men who wanted second or third helpings of food.

In the early twenties Big Bertha carried over eight hundred workingmen, bosses and assistants. For an egg breakfast I would use eight to ten cases of eggs, and six to eight hundred pounds of bacon, and sausage. There was no limit on the amount of bacon, sausage or ham that a man could have. We always served either a hot or cold cereal, boiled potatoes with the skins on and plenty of hot coffee, but only three eggs. Fried eggs were cooked in a seven inch skillet on top of the wood stoves. Each stove would hold around forty egg skillets. The kitchen must have had three to four hundred egg skillets. When not in use they would be placed in burlap potato

bags, stored away until the next egg morning. If it rained the bags would get wet, and the darn skillet would rust over night.

No doubt you are wondering who broke all the eggs and how so many eggs could be cooked in so short of time. On egg mornings the short end would send out two to four men to break eggs to the kitchen, and the long end would send eight to ten men. The colored dining tent would send out four men. The kitchen always carried small narrow tables just for this purpose. These tables would be set up just outside the kitchen side wall near the stoves. As mentioned before the wood stoves were in units of two with a stove pipe in the middle. Two men would break the eggs into dessert dishes. Then two men on the stove side of the table would dump the eggs into the skillets atop the stove. The egg breaking marathon would keep going until the breakfast meal had been served. Then the egg men would clean off their tables. This was more of a task than you would surmise, as during the process of breaking and dumping the eggs into the skillets some of the eggs would remain on the top of the table. With the heat from the stove and heat from "old sol" that goo would be cemented on the table.

Beef Steak for Breakfast

Beef steak would be on the breakfast menu in the Ringling-Barnum cook house about once every ten days or two weeks. In those years the cook house had its own meat butchers, so Webb would buy carcasses of beef. The butchers would cut up the meat into chucks, ribs, briskets, plates, rumps, top and bottom rounds and shoulder clods. The butchers would corn their own beef when they had too much surplus beef.

Now back to the beef steak breakfast. As was natural the better cuts of steak would end up on the staff, performers, bosses and assistants tables. The workingmen would get a mixture of top and bottom rounds. All the heavy duty griddles that were made to fit the wood stoves were stored in the range and boiler wagon.

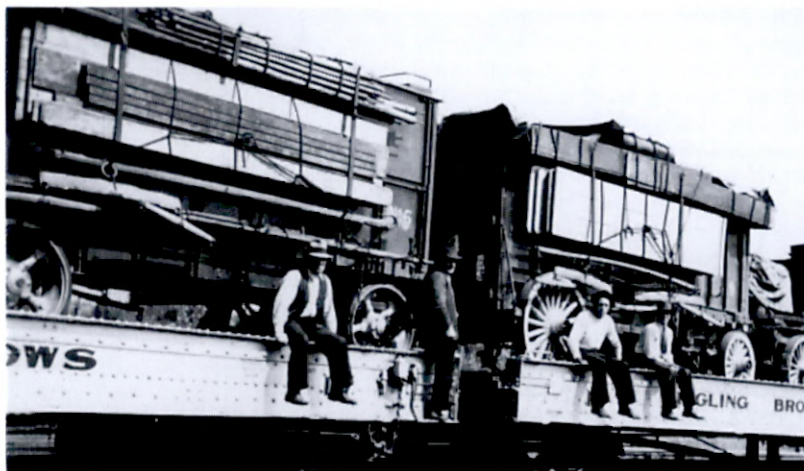
The beef rounds were first sliced, then cut into portions of about four to six ounces each. Then they were placed on the griddle to be fried. It was next to impossible to sort out the rare, medium and

well done steaks. So they were all thrown into a steam table insert. More often than not the steaks at the bottom of the container in the steam table would be there after breakfast was over. The steam table men would pick them up and dump them on top of the other steaks.

In the early twenties the baggage stock and train crew departments would at times give us plenty of headaches. Don't get me wrong when I put my finger on any certain department. Even the departments that gave us the most trouble contained many a good, respectable man. But the "skinners" and helpers had many agitators and heavy drinkers. Some were "outlawed" from other circuses. The day after pay day we could always look for trouble from these drivers and their helpers. The train department had a rough and dangerous job at all times. The polers never knew when a small pebble would kick the pole of the wagon from the man's hand and throw him off the flat car, same with the man who choked the wheels of those heavy wagons, one miscue and he could lose a hand or perhaps be crippled for life. So at times I would try to overlook their contrary attitude.

At all three meals on the workingmen's tables we had first and second waiters. The first waiters would pick up the sectional crockery plate as the man would be seated. The second waiters only took the plates from the men who had already been served. The second waiters were always in hot water with the customers. They would go up one aisle and down another picking up plates from the men who wanted more food. By the time these waiters reached the kitchen and waited in line to be served they no doubt had forgotten what food was to go on each plate. So when it came their time to be served at the

The No. 4 cookhouse wagon on the flying squadron around 1930. Pfening Archives.



steam table they would refill the plate with anything that was in the steam table. When he handed back the plate the man would take one look and tell the waiter that it was not his plate or that he did not want all the "crap" on his plate and would dump the entire contents of the plate on the ground under the table. He would then send the plate again to get what he wanted or a fresh plate.

Every steak breakfast was a nightmare to the head waiter and his assistant. As mentioned before it was next to impossible to serve steaks the way the men would order them but we could not argue with every man who sat down. So especially on steak breakfasts the men would keep sending their plates to the kitchen until they received a portion of meat to their liking. Multiply one man by eight hundred or more then you come up with a huge amount of waste. For the entire personnel I would say that between 1,200 to 1,500 pounds of beef were used for one breakfast. These figures may seem high, but when you consider that all employees of the circus could have all the steak they cared to eat, the figure is about right.

On the long end, which was my domain for too many years, I always had at least four men detailed to garbage. They did not do anything else at meal time. They cleared garbage on the dishes on the long tables and serviced the ground under the tables, picking up silverware, cups and scraps that had dropped or been thrown. Whenever we had steak they earned their keep. They would pick up buckets of steak that only had one bite cut out, some none at all. All this was thrown into the garbage cans that the twenty four men furnished each day.

Pork Chop Breakfast

Pork chops were often served in the cook house. That was another block buster of a breakfast. It was nothing for a workingman to put away six to eight pork chops, along with hot cakes. Pork chops were cooked in deep black pans atop the wood stoves in deep grease. They were also put on sheet pans and baked in the ovens. The roast pans would be atop the fire box and the griddle would take up the rest of the stove. So again there would be heavy waste as some of the chops would come



out of the roast pans cooked to a frazzle. They were too hard to cut with a cleaver. That was another 1,200 pounds of pork chops for breakfast.

Chicken Dinner

This was the easiest meal of them

The cookhouse girdle man making pancakes, a staple for breakfast. Pfening Archives.

all. No seconds on the chicken, but you could have more vegetables and potatoes. The spring chickens would av-

erage about two and a half to two pounds and three quarters. Every person would get a half chicken. Besides this they could have soup, salad, vegetables, potatoes, dessert and coffee. Some of the chickens were fried on top of the wood stoves, others were put on sheet pans, greased, sprinkled with paprika and baked in the ovens.

Dutch Plate

This was another easy meal, except for the kitchen help who had to prepare the plates. The dutch plate was served at the noon meal. During the hot summer weather it was a cold plate that was out of this world. All the plate boxes were carried into the kitchen. The cooks would put up long tables, then cover the tables with the crockery plates. Each cook would put a separate food item on the plate.

Delving into the past I came up with this list: potato salad; can of sardines, with a quarter lemon; one tomato, quartered; cottage cheese; assorted cold meats; hard boiled egg; cold pickled beets; assorted cheeses; radishes; green onions; olives; and whole dill pickle.

There was also dessert and coffee. It was quite a meal.

The Circus Historical Society 1996 Convention

Planning has now been completed for the National Convention of the Circus Historical Society. The dates, July 15 to 17, were selected to make it possible for registrants to also visit Milwaukee to see the Great Circus Parade on July 14 and the Royal Hanneford Circus, and to remain after the convention in Baraboo to see the return of the Great Circus Train on the evening of July 17, a special concert of circus music the evening of July 18 and to continue visitation and use of the Museum facilities through the end of the week.

The featured banquet speaker will be internationally noted historian Arthur Saxon, who will speak on the subject of "New Light on the Life of James A. Bailey." Given Dr. Saxon's impeccable scholarship and impressive credentials, his encyclopedic knowledge of Bailey's partner, P. T. Barnum, and his abilities as an orator of renown, the presentation will prove to be one of heroic proportions.

In addition to the stellar panel members noted in the last issue, the important panel discussion on the "Circus in Contemporary America" has been augmented with the acceptance of an invitation extended to Tim Holst, Vice President, Production and Talent, Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus, to join the group, along with Circus World Museum's Executive Director, Greg Parkinson, a keen observer of the modern circus in its worldwide context.

Over a dozen quality papers on circus history have already been tendered for presentation at the convention, covering an array of topics from Risley acts to Ringling-Barnum's new Elephant Conservation Facility, and Buffalo Bill's Wild West to the first hippo to mash American soil. There will be a recollection of the Beatty rail show, new insight on Ringlingville developments, the history of the Lowande family, more revelations on Bloomington's circus heritage and a view into the life of James M. Nixon. Whatever your interest in circus history, you will find the varied program of considerable educational value.

For further information, please refer to the article on page 19 of the January-February 1996 *Bandwagon*, which also contains the registration sheet to be used. We urge you to register immediately and to make your reservations for lodging as soon as possible. Baraboo is a tourist community and is quite popular in mid-July, so do not delay in making your plans. Registration closes on July 1.

Several astute readers have brought to our attention the discrepancy in convention registration fees in the last issue. Please be advised that the correct fee is that given on the registration sheet, \$85.00 per person. The fee includes all convention activities, two banquet meals, the welcoming buffet and a season's pass to Circus World Museum. We regret any inconvenience the oversight may have caused. Come join your fellow members at the 1996 convention. The event starts with an open house and buffet luncheon at the Henry Ringling residence, 201 8th Street, 10:00 AM on July 15, when you will also be able to pick up your registration package.

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1952-53, 53-54, or 1957 RB winterquarters pass 1.00 each
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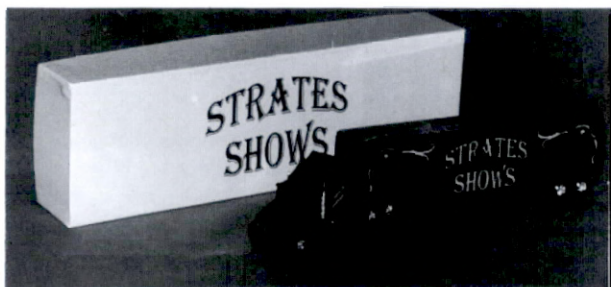
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1896

The Great Adam Forepaugh & Sells Brothers America's Greatest Shows Consolidated entered Kansas in 1896 at Pittsburg for exhibitions on June 3. First sign of the coming was revealed in a story in the Pittsburg *Daily Headlight* on May 13.

"All doubts that the 'Great Adam Forepaugh and Sells Brothers' combined shows' would not visit Pittsburg this year were dispelled when their advertising car No. 1 came in on the Frisco late last night. Early this morning five wagons with bill posters, paste and paper, were sent out to the neighboring towns to cover the small barns, fences and every other available place with the gorgeous colored paper to be read by the villagers and country people to their hearts content. The car is five days behind, but that was caused by the start out, which was bad. It was just a week behind at the start, but has gained two days since."

It was "CREATION'S CROWNING THOUSAND WONDERS. THE NATION'S SHOW. THERE IS NO OTHER." In an advertisement the show claimed to have at least two of everything including,

- "2 Biggest Menageries on Earth.
- "2 Biggest Circuses on Earth.
- "2 Biggest Hippodromes on Earth.
- "2 Biggest Herds of Elephants."

Featured in the menagerie were "The Only Trained Sea Lions and Seals, Pair of Giant Hippopotami, Tremendous Two-Horned Sumatra Rhinoceros, Monster Polar Bear, Flock of Ostriches, African Eland, Ethiopian Gnu, Niger Antelope." As an aside the ad stated, "We have them all. No One Else Has."

Lewis Sells, manager in 1896. Pfening Archives.

The ad mentioned "100 Chariot Dens Aquariums and cars. 4 rings. 2 Stages. Mid-Air Triumphs. 300 Champions. 100 Acts. The New Women in Motley. A Real Royal Japanese Circus. Big Performing Animal Arena. Children's Topsy-Turvy Circus. All the Superbest Races All Time."

Their "15 Mammoth Waterproof Tents. Seating Capacity 15,000." There were "25 Uniformed Ushers."

"ADMISSION TO ALL 50 CENTS. CHILDREN UNDER 9 YEARS, HALF PRICE.

ONLY BIG SHOW COMING The Nation's Show There is No Other

Vol. IV, Chapter VIII
By Orin Copple King

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The ad was graced with a cut featuring "The Only Clown Women." Another cut portrayed over 20 cavorting sea lions and seals, some of which were playing musical instruments--an accordion, tambourine, banjo, bass and snare drums, horns, but most remarkably, a bass viol and a violin.

On show day the *Headlight* reported that, "The first section of the Great Adam Forepaugh and Sells Brothers shows combined arrived via the Frisco this morning between two and three o'clock, and was followed up by two others in the course of an hour, afterwards. The first train was in charge of Conductor Oliver and Engineer Collier, on the second was Conductor Woodruff and Engineer Cooper, and the third was Conductor Mansfield and Engineer Rigby. In the three sections were forty-seven cars but a number of them are the unusually long kind and heavy, and it might be said that the entire circus train is equal to about fifty-five of the average freight cars. The work of unloading commenced at the first break of day and by seven o'clock the entire train load of cages, baggage, freight and band wagons, chariots, etc., were unloaded and on the grounds south of town."

Competition was provided by Hance White's swings which attracted much attention from the little folks, especially the one run by steam and accompanied by a band organ.

One family had good reason to remember the parade when their mules became frightened by the elephants and

caused the wagon to tip, throwing the occupants to the ground. The wife's head received a bad gash, but the farmer and the children were only bruised. After a short run the mules were captured.

"Sells Brothers big show did not have a crowded house last night," according to the *Headlight*, "but gave their usual unsurpassed entertainment. They had some new features with them of more than ordinary merit.

"A heard (sic) of eight monster educated elephants gave an exhibition of animal intelligence surpassing anything ever before seen in the saw dust ring. Their ready and correct responses to the commands of their trainer were marvels of wonder. They were put through a quadrille with less mistakes than many a prompter at a public dance encounters.

"The trained seals also showed a wonderful amount of intelligence during their exhibition.

Peter Sells, general advance manager in 1896. Pfening Archives.

"Weitzel, English and Zorella captured the audience with their work on the flying trapeze. Their daring leaps and wonderful performance showed they were in reality flying human meteors.

"Other work upon bars, rings and trapeze were worthy of mention, but the program embraced too much for a newspaper to attempt to describe all work of merit without a special edition, devoted exclusively to the show.

"Everyone was well pleased with the show from beginning to end and concede it to be the largest and best that ever visited Crawford county."

In another column the *Headlight* expressed the opinion that Forepaugh-Sells "Made No Money in Pittsburg. The big show day is now in the past and from the size of the crowds under the tents both yesterday afternoon and evening one would not be led to believe that the treasury of the combined shows was materially increased by the visit to Pittsburg. In the afternoon there was plenty of seats left and last night's performance was not witnessed by a crowded house. This taken in connection with the fact that the aggregation is at an enormous expense, it would hardly be an under estimate to



say their expenses almost eat up the receipts."

Ahead of the show the *Kansan*, Pittsburg's other paper, reported on May 21 that the train consisted of 50 cars of 60' length--25 flat cars, 11 box (sic) cars, 6 stock cars, 5 passenger coaches and 3 advance cars. The information undoubtedly came from "Mr. Boyd, the advance agent," who visited the *Kansan* on May 18.

"Among the original features which were on the program," the *Kansan* related after show day, "were the living statues by eight beautiful women in historical and mythological representations."

Other performances that impressed the *Kansan* reporter were, "Ryan's wonderful flights on the aerial bars, the Mellottes' acrobatic work, Ryan and Weitzel original comedy work, Pauline Lee's bare back riding in graduating (sic) costume, the herd of performing elephants, Cradoc, the Roman ax juggler, the performing seal and sea lions, revolving bar work and other features too numerous to mention.

"Pittsburg was over crowded yesterday, there being thousands who came in on the different excursions from the surrounding towns. Everybody was pleased."

The poor attendance reported by the *Headlight* does not quite fit the *Kansan*'s report of the city being over crowded by thousands of visitors.

Four handouts that were used repeatedly in Kansas appeared in Wyandotte *Herald* ahead of the exhibitions in Kansas City, Missouri, on June 8: "An Unrivalled Wild Beast Exhibit.

"A column of space in ordinary type would not suffice to enumerate the number and variety of perfect wild beasts, birds and amphibia massed in the enormous Adam Forepaugh and Sells Brothers consolidated menageries. And there are many stupendous, curious and beautiful creatures, never before placed on exhibition and nowhere else to be seen. Included among these are the only school of trained seals and sea lions, the pair of giant male and female hippopotamuses, an Ethiopian gnu, or horned horse; a niger antelope, an African eland, a full-grown polar bear, and a monster double-horned, white Sumatra rhinoceros.

"Long-Skirt Aerial Marvels.

"The great Adam Forepaugh and Sells Brothers united circuses are distinguished by the first American appearance of those European flying trapeze wonders, the Arrigosi Sisters. These are the only performers in the world whose acts are accomplished in-

THE GREAT ADAM FOREPAUGH SHOWS COMBINED WITH **SELLS BROTHERS ENORMOUS UNITED SHOWS**

AMERICA'S GREATEST SHOWS

ABSOLUTELY THE MIGHTIEST HOLIDAY AGGREGATION OF EARTH'S EVER KNOWN MAN. SUPERBLY MAGNIFICENT IN REALISM. IN POSSIBILITIES AND IN FAR-REACHING EFFECTS.

THE FINEST SEPARATE MENAGERIES. THE BEST DOUBLE CIRCUSES. THE GRANDEST DISTINCT HIPPODROMES. THE MOST SURPASSINGLY STUPENDOUS COMBINED PARADES.

L. Abbott July 4 1896

full dress and long skirts, and their brilliantly sensational gigantic dives and leaps, and meteoric evolutions are the arenic triumph of the day.

"Ladies of Laughter.

"The arena is the latest thing to succumb entirely to the resistless aggressiveness of the new woman movement. Not content with winning and seductively wearing equestrian, aerial, acrobatic and iron-jawed laurels in the ring, the up-to-date maiden has seized upon the whip and usurped the throne of Momus, by triumphantly assuming the roles of ring master and clown in the great Forepaugh and Sells Brothers united circuses. Nor is her ambition based on unstable sawdust, for she has made a prodigious hit.

"Ten Renowned Bareback Equestrians.

"A circus without first-class bareback riders would be regarded almost as incomplete as the play of Hamlet with all save old Polonius omitted. The management of the great Forepaugh and Sells Brothers America's greatest shows consolidated more than recognize this fact by introducing at each performance the Orfords, Frank Melville, Linda Jeal, the Hobsons, Polly Lee, William Gorman, Donna Adele, and William Wallett, the recognized ten champion principal, double, carrying, jockey, juggling and hurdle bareback equestrians of both hemispheres."

Kansas City, Missouri, is not in Kansas, but it is, literally, just across the street.

The show arrived in Kansas City early Sunday morning. In the afternoon "Dick," a dangerous elephant, made a vicious attack on his handler, Joe Beatty.

According to the Wyandotte *Herald*, Dick "came within an ace of killing him. His keeper was standing by him holding him by the trunk when he struck him

This letterhead used in 1896 is printed with the title in gold outlined in black. The drawings of the Sells brothers and Adam Forepaugh are in red. The letter, signed by S. H. Barrett, was written to the Strobridge Lithograph Company. Pfening Archives.

with it and knocked him thirty feet away. He immediately charged at him, knocking him down and trying to run his huge tusks through him. The keeper wrapped his arms around his tusks and held on for dear life while the elephant jabbed his tusks into the ground and tried to shake him loose. The assistants began prodding the beast with steel prods and the keeper seeing his opportunity let go and jumped to one side. 'Dick' swung his trunk around and trumpeted viciously. By means of two more docile elephants a breast-work was made and the brute was quieted down and all four legs securely chained. The keeper was badly bruised and sore from his encounter. 'Dick' is said to have killed and crippled two or three keepers and has the reputation of being an unruly brute."

The above happening as the press department reported it in the columns of the Kansas City *Star* occupied nearly two entire columns, but it was a melodramatic struggle full of quotes and fraught with impending disaster.

According to the *Star*: "You're a lucky man, Joe," said Chambers, [William Chambers, menagerie superintendent] with a serious shake of his head. "The only thing that saved your life was that you kept your wits with you. If you'd lost your head you'd have been gone."

"Don't you ever get frightened?" asked a reporter of Beatty.

"No, I wouldn't be in this business if I could lose my head.

"Well, I wouldn't do your work for a \$1,000 a day."

"I do it for a good deal less than that."

"Will you work old Dick in the ring tomorrow?"

"I'll work him, yes. It may be only for a minute, but that bull will never get the best of me till he kills me."

"It was decided that old Dick must be punished. Mr. Chambers said: 'If an elephant goes after you and gets off without punishment he thinks you're afraid, and he'll kill you the next time he gets a chance. If you ever run from an elephant he'll never let you near him again.'"

"Chambers and Beatty selected a spot on the circus grounds between two trees. They got long iron rods and took them into the blacksmith's tent. At 9 o'clock they intended to lead old Dick out between Babe and Dutch, both docile elephants, and chain him fore and aft to the two trees. Then with red hot irons they would burn his hide and mouth till his stubborn temper was broken and he cried for mercy."

"The newspaper men stayed on the grounds to see it. They sat with the animal men on bales of hay under the menagerie tent and waited for 9 o'clock. In the semi-darkness, the circus men told blood-curdling stories of mad elephants and how keepers and trainers had been killed. At 8:30, a fire was started in the forge and the irons put in to heat. Then Louis (sic) Sells, one of the owners of the show, came in and forbade the punishment."

"Why, men, you can't do anything of that kind here," he said. "You know that bull will roar so loud he can be heard blocks away. In ten minutes you will have 10,000 people here. It may take two hours to break old Dick down. This crowd around you don't know what it's being done for. They see only a poor dumb brute being tortured by a lot of heartless circus men. You can't do it. They would want to lynch you. You must wait till we get out in some small town where the show lot is out of town."

"The animal men grumbled. Beatty said he would resign right there unless he was allowed to break the animal's temper."

"If I don't get him, he'll get me. I know my business and I'm the one that's got to work this bull. I'll work him my way or I won't work him at all."

"That's right, Joe. I never saw a bull



Cleopatra's Barge tableau in a 1896 parade was formerly on the Forepaugh show. Pfening Archives.

try to kill a man that he wasn't burnt for it. You've got to do it."

"Sells talked coaxingly to the men, and his argument was a strong one. 'Sleep over it to-night, Beatty, and we'll talk about it to-morrow.'"

"Yes, it will be too late then. That bull will forget what he is being punished for if he don't get it now."

"At last Chambers, too, advised Beatty to wait till morning. A few moments later Beatty passed the long string of elephants in the darkness and old Dick reached for him. Then they lighted a chandelier and chained him, with his legs straddled out and his belly flat on the ground, and left him chained that way."

In a handout on June 4, the *Star* named Hugh Battersby, "the living skeleton," Mons. Diavalo, "the fire king," and Frank Melville, "the veteran equestrian director." The lot was at Fifteenth and Vine Streets.

"The hippopotami and the elephants were the features of the long procession," the *Star* reported in its account of the parade. "There were two of the former, lying slothfully in their cage, accompanied by their keeper, and eight of the latter. There were three bands of music, a double quartette of negro jubilee singers, two bagpipe players, a Santa Claus, a Cleopatra, an Uncle Sam, a Cinderella, two clowns, chariot racers, knights, jockeys and any number of closed cages."

"From 8 o'clock until after 10 o'clock all the street cars from the suburbs were crowded with men, women, children of every size and color."

"In all respects the parade was by far the best that has ever been seen in Kansas City. It was an orderly affair, conducted with quiet celerity, but without haste. Perfect discipline was maintained. The wagons were resplendent with gilt. The great band on its golden chariot could play something better than the 'hoop-la' airs of the sawdust arena. The horses were in the pink of condition and their riders were beautifully costumed. The display was indeed a street pageant, a gaudy picture, but one which impressed the old folk almost as forcibly as it did the younger generation."

The *Star* announced that it would pay the way to the evening exhibition for 1,000 of its carrier boys.

"The departure of the boys for the circus was scheduled to take place at 6:30 o'clock. As early as 2 o'clock in the afternoon, they haunted *The Star* office in eager quest of tickets. At 6 o'clock, Grand Avenue at Eleventh Street was filled with them and overflowed. Then the cheering began and continued without cessation until the circus grounds were reached one hour later."

"Forty-five wagons and vans of all descriptions reached *The Star* office about 6 o'clock and in the twinkling of an eye the boys swarmed over the sides like ants on a lump of sugar. Some of the wagons were packed so full that half the boys were taken off, when they immediately attacked other wagons. The noise filled the air and vibrated as if a lot of miniature steam whistles were at work, each endeavoring to drown the other. The boys in each wagon tried to out-yell the others and the din brought people on the run from neighboring streets until they filled the sidewalks."

"A few minutes before the time to start the rattle of drums was heard up Eleventh Street and the red coats of the Pickaninny band gleamed in the distance. The boys in the wagons went wild with their cheering and presently the band marched through the wagons to the head of the procession playing grandly, inspired by the cheering. It was a stirring moment."

The procession moved off for the show grounds where not 1,000 boys saw the circus, but 1,450.

Under the heading "ALL A CIRCUS SHOULD BE" the *Star* reviewed the performance, giving scant attention to the performers, but nearly a column to

Dick, the dangerous elephant who, on Sunday, tried to kill his keeper, Joe Beatty.

Dick appeared in the performance but did not participate in the quadrille.

"But when the denizens of the tropics were made to dance the quadrille, keeping time to lively music, the appreciation of the audience broke loose in laughter and exclamations and hand clappings. Beatty called the changes. At first each of the big dancers bowed to his or her partner, excepting the odd one who had to be content with kneeling profoundly to the audience." Dick could not be trusted and was left out of the dance. "Then it was 'first couple forward and back,' and 'second couple forward and back' without a misstep. 'Forward and back,' and 'cross over,' and 'grand right and left' were gone through with in true ball room style. Then with a bow and 'all promenade with partners and alone,' the little dance was ended and Beatty and his elephants were given a hearty round of applause.

"Dick's temper was so ugly yesterday morning that he could not be taken on the morning parade. His little eyes glistened when a keeper went near him and he struck at him with his trunk. While Joe Beatty was out on parade with the other elephants. William Chambers, the superintendent of animals, had four strong iron clamps made and fastened two on each tusk, one near the head and the other near the end of the tusk. To these clamps strong chains were fastened that reached down between his forelegs and fastened to another chain that circled his body behind his forelegs. Other chains ran from this to his hind legs and all were drawn taught. Chambers worked two hours putting the chains. At first old Dick resented the shackling, but Chambers had each foot hobbled out to strong stake in the ground and each time Dick showed fight Chambers gave him all he wished of it. He was beaten with iron rods, hooked and burned with carbolic acid where the flesh was tender under the forelegs and at last he cried for mercy in a whimper that sounded like a human voice. After that he allowed his keepers to pet him, but it was not considered safe to work him in the ring.

"Old Dick is 34 years old and has been owned by the Forepaughs twelve years. In 1888 he was in the elephant band with the Frank A. Rob-

ins circus. While the show was in Berlin, Va., old Dick took just such a cranky turn as he did here and broke out of his tent, overturning cages and everything else in his way. He swam the river to an island and stayed there. George Craig, the boss animal man, and Marx (sic) Monroe took Topsy and Romeo, two other elephants of the herd, and rode out after him. Dick showed fight, pinned Monroe to the ground with one of his tusks, crushed the bones in his feet. Topsy and Romeo fought Dick into submission, butting him till he begged for mercy. Dick was taken to two trees and burned till he cried.

"William Chambers was there when it was done. He has burned many rogue elephants. It sometimes takes an hour to break their spirit of stubbornness, but when it is broken the big brute cries pitifully and for months and maybe years afterward, he is the devoted slave of his keeper and is treated as all other good elephants are--with more kindness than is shown a great many men with the show."

It took two hours to load Old Dick into the elephant car for the trip to Ottawa.

"H. A. Mann, Advance agent for the Forepaugh-Sells Bros. circus was in the city this morning," the *Ottawa Daily Republican* noted on May 30. An ad appeared on the 30th with additional insertions June 3 and 8, heralding the exhibitions of June 9. On June 2 a third advertising car arrived in Ottawa.

The most memorable event of circus day was the collapse of a balcony on the Rohrbach building spilling about 25 parade watchers on to the sidewalk.

"The under iron braces broke, while the upper ones only bent and when the platform tilted as far down as these bent braces would allow, the weight of the crowd leaning against the iron railings broke them off and the persons tumbled about 12 feet to the stone sidewalk below.

Tableau No. 26 with the clown band on top in 1896. Pfening Archives.



"The 25 persons fell in a promiscuous heap one upon another. Luckily for those beneath they fell in about the middle of the sidewalk and the crowd below was either at the outer edge or in near the building. Miss Mabel Beachy was the only one below who received any serious injury.

"One lady jumped to her feet soon after striking the pavement, brushed back her hair and started running up the street apparently uninjured.

"Mrs. Steelman saved herself by stooping and just slid to the pavement. She held to her boy with one hand and neither were badly injured.

"Mrs. Stinebaugh rests easy today with the exception of severe pains in her spine.

"Miss Ethel Crain is suffering intense pain. A spike from the railing penetrated her jaw into her mouth and it is feared she is hurt internally.

"Mrs. Day is recovering from a severe concussion of the brain, but will not be out of danger for several days. Mrs. Day was one of the most seriously injured ones and never regained consciousness until late last night."

In another column the *Republican* stated that, "Aside from the commotion caused by the accident Tuesday a very cool time was had. Ten extra police were on duty and but three arrests were made during the day and they were brought in by the nightwatch during the night-time. One of these was a half-witted fellow who claimed to be traveling with the show and was arrested on the charge of intoxication. The other two were also plain drunks."

The *Republican* made no mention of the attendance or the performance, but did report the plight of two young country gentlemen who came to town in the middle of the night so as not to miss the arrival of the show trains. The night was hot and they had walked a considerable distance. They took their shoes off their tired feet and lay down to rest. While they slumbered some one stole their shoes.

A woman lost her purse containing about six dollars and two return tickets to Rantoul, but the most amazing loss was reported as: "LOST--Between Darby's and the Santa Fe depot, set of artificial teeth. Return to this office."

The *Republican* on June 11 reported that, "Most of the persons injured in the balcony accident Tuesday are doing well and the in-

dications are favorable that no deaths will result."

Promptly at 10 o'clock on June 10, according to the *Emporia Weekly Republican*, "The forerunners of the parade announced its approach and the immense crowd of people 'lined up' on either side of the street and there witnessed one of the most elegantly equipped, costly and elaborate parades that ever appeared in this city. A novel feature was the two advance guards, mounted, wearing the armor of a Roman soldier with helmet and shield, and a uniformed drum corps. Then came the long line of cages and chariots headed by the bareback riders in gorgeous costumes.

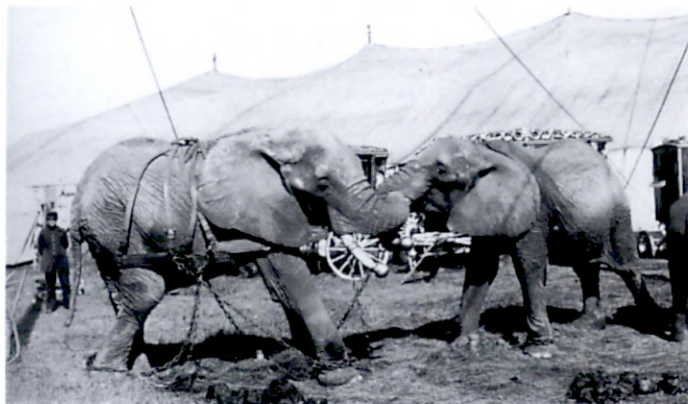
"The large and massive band wagons were resplendent with gilt and mirrors. The cages alone, containing animals, formed a line nearly a mile in length. Numerous open cages showed magnificent specimens of lions, tigers, panthers and hyenas. The most attractive one was that containing the hippopotami. Two of these large beasts were seen lying in a tank of water. The clowns attired in their striped suits furnished much amusement for the small boys. The music of the bands and the jubilee singers was exceptionally fine. In every particular the entire parade was all that could be desired and was in its grandeur and magnificence all that was advertised. A hasty visit to their exhibition grounds this afternoon revealed a tent packed with spectators and everything running as smooth as clock work. It is estimated that 6,000 were under the canvas."

After show day the *Daily Republican* reported that, "Precisely at 2 o'clock the opening number on the programme was the grand triumphant entree of the combined shows. It was a magnificent panorama.

"The living statues were the second presentation in which numerous historic events were illustrated. Here the triumph of nature over art--the breathing form over cold marble impressed the vast audience that no ideal could equal the real. The only pair of hippopotami in captivity were driven around the hippodrome track and were special features of interest.

"Messrs. Garnell, Cargell and Ryan in their performance on the horizontal bars at the top of the canvas, by their sensational flights, somersaults and pin wheels showed their superiority in their line.

"The fancy riding by Miss Pauline Lee is worthy of special mention.



African elephants Topsy and Romeo in 1896. Pfening Archives.

"The troupe of educated ponies gave an excellent performance.

"The Millettes Bros., acrobats, performed marvelous feats.

"The English bounding jockey act by William Walleet, the 'jolly jesters' by Messrs. Ryan and Weitzel, held the closest attention of the audience and were exceptionally fine."

The elephants and Joe Beatty were among the favorites of the audience. "Ugly Dick" the unruly fellow, did not appear in the parade in the morning nor in the performance in the afternoon, it being deemed best not to release him.

"The juggling artist, Cradoc, with his Roman axes, performed many new and original feats.

"The Stirk family, consisting of six members, gave a bicycle performance which has never been equalled by any wheelmen on a platform. Their pyramids were quickly and gracefully formed.

"The grand climax of all performances by dumb animals was reached near the conclusion of the performance by a troupe of Alaskan seals and sea lions, trained by Prof. Joseph Woodward."

Three simultaneous performances in three rings by equestriennes Jeal, Lee and Orford was considered one of the most interesting presentations.

"The grand final of hippodrome events consisted of ten exciting and closely contested races. The broad sword combat, the lariat throwing and frontier riding was most ably illustrated, and many tricks done which would seem impossible when not actually seen. The four horse Roman chariot race closed the entertainment.

"The concert given after the main performance is well worthy of note. It is given by a troupe of special cork artists who rank second to none on the American stage. It was in line of excellence with the big show. The plantation singing was heartily appreciated as was shown by the repeated encores.

"The show is probably too large for the times, but the people of the west will miss a great treat, if they have the opportunity and fail to take it in."

The reporter acknowledged the graciousness of Press Agent Charles W. Seeley who took him behind the scenes, and perhaps wrote the review.

"The elephant in chains," reported the *Emporia Gazette*, "was not the bad elephant. The bad elephant was in his car and was not taken out. At least that's what the advance agent said."

In another column the *Gazette* related that, "The elephant loaded with chains was viewed with horror by the crowd, as the bad elephant that tried to kill his keeper. The tent hands had a good laugh yesterday at the people who said they could see a vicious look in the beast's eye. The tent hands said that the elephant in chains is really the jolliest, best natured elephant in the lot. He is put in chains to satisfy the demands of people who wish to know which elephant tried to kill his keeper. The fact of the business is probably that the vicious elephant and the story of how he attacked the keeper, is a myth, printed at the rate of so much a line in the Kansas City papers. The press agent's business is to seine for suckers. He made a big haul with the murderous elephant."

"The man that got next to the Emporia heart was the clown in citizens clothes who 'took pictures.' He was the funniest thing that Emporia has seen for some time. He was all right."

The circus was a stimulant for business. One livery firm took in \$100.

Forepaugh-Sells played Wichita in the rain on June 11. James A. DeWolfe, "genial press agent," won the respect of the town's newsmen by his untiring efforts to make it pleasant for the fraternity.

"The only thing against the circus," the *Wichita Daily Beacon* complained, "is there is too much of it. Three rings and a stage with continuous performances kept the eye busy and all the acts so thrilling that the observer does not want to miss one of them."

The coming of the show to Hutchinson on June 12, was announced far in advance by the *Clipper* on April 22. All of Hutchinson's newspapers carried advertisements, but after the exhibitions they had not one word to say.

The exhibitions of June 13 received extensive coverage from all three Salina newspapers. The *Herald* covered

it best, "THE SELLS FOREPAUGH CIRCUS.

"There is no greater effort to please the people than is made by the managers of the modern circus. From an educational standard the circus of today must be all that it advertises. It is commonly asserted that 'everybody goes to the circus' but this would not last long, were it not for the fact that each season brings with it new features for the circus, and it is mostly through a fear that something will be presented not hitherto seen by the public, that causes the public to attend *en masse*.

"The Sells-Forepaugh (sic) show as given in Salina last Saturday will be hard to improve upon. From the beginning, when the parade started with 45 wagons and the large herd of elephants, to the close of the evening concert, the Sells-Forepaugh circus was a success. Great interest was centered on the big elephant 'Dick' as reports of his 'ugliness' and attempt to kill his keeper while in K. C. had reached Salina. He was not suffered to enter the parade here. The ring of trained elephants can not be excelled. Their performance was just about perfect.

"The seals that play on musical instruments and sing was the greatest novelty the big show had to exhibit and they were a novelty. When it was proposed a few years ago to train them circus men generally laughed at the idea. But it was soon found that they had more in intelligence than those people gave them credit for. They were smarter than they looked. In a few months they had learned some tricks and they have been in training only two years now. The man who exhibits them draws a very large salary, and in the winter he takes them to New York and exhibits them in vaudeville houses. The little seal that played the snare drum and coughed for fish is considered the cleverest of the lot.

"Of the performers on horse back, trapeze, etc., many are new in this country. Some don't even know the English language--don't even know enough to swear, one man said. The family--the woman in the long pink dress, the girl in black, and the little girl in pink, who acted on the trapeze--are French, and the father of the three is the old man who stood below and helped them down from the net. He watches every performance and always sees them to and from the cars.

"Nearly all the women riders are experienced. Some of them have been riding for many

years--one for twenty. You couldn't tell it though, for her gray hair was covered by a blonde wig. Another has made \$75,000 riding, and is soon to retire.

"One of the best all-around performers in the whole show was Tom Ryan. He began his work before the show commenced, and kept it up to the end. He was the man with the camera who would stop country people in front of the reserved seats and induce them to have their pictures taken. He would take a simple minded man from the rural districts, adjust his head for a profile view, tell him to keep his eyes on a certain spot for just a minute, and then the camera man would disappear and the country fellow would be recalled to earth by the applause and laughter behind. Then he would look for the photographer then make a break for the nearest crowd. This trick was worked several times Saturday afternoon and the spectators were convulsed over it every time.

"Pretty soon this man Ryan appeared and did a comic turn, taking off the fellows on the stage. Then he came again and climbed to the bars at the top of the tent, where he proved he was an excellent gymnast. Then he came another time, minus the little bunch of whiskers on his chin and gave a trapeze performance that was wonderful for its daring. He appeared in fully a dozen acts and they were about the best in the show.

"Ryan got a bad fall at Topeka Monday night though he was not hurt. It was during the work on the high trapeze, and bars in which two men hang from the bar and catch the third as he jumps from the top of the tent. Ryan was the jumper. As he was swinging on the trapeze at arms' length the heavy beam to which the trapeze was fastened, broke in the center and Ryan lost his hold and fell. He struck near the edge of the net and rolled off onto the ground. He was not injured but merely shaken up. The other two performers also fell, but both struck the net safely. It was in this act that Ryan made two unsuccessful efforts Saturday afternoon, but he redeemed himself in the evening,

The No. 3 Forepaugh-Sells advance car in 1896. Pfening Archives.



never making a balk.

"The six Shetland ponies that appeared in the middle ring were trained only last winter at Columbus. They are little beauties and go through their parts splendidly.

"But, why devote so much space to a circus 'write up?' Simply because such a circus as that which visited Salina last week is worth the paper."

"Young's Salina meat market," according to the *Daily Republican*, "furnished about 1000 pounds of fresh meat for the circus, besides 75 chickens and a considerable quantity of salt and smoked meats. J. C. Johnson furnished about five tons of hay, 90 bushels of oats, 20 bushels of corn, bran, wood, etc."

In a spiteful mood Ringling billed Salina for July 3, a date that was not meant to be kept.

On May 22 the *Democrat* reported the presence in Topeka of advertising car No. 1 in the charge of S. H. Barrett. Barrett was married to a sister of the Sells brothers and for several years managed the Sells No. 2 show.

"Everybody who sells newspapers in the city of Topeka has been invited to go to the great Forepaugh and Sells Bros. combined circus which exhibits in Topeka tomorrow as a guest of the *Capital*. A special train of street cars has been provided for their accommodation and will leave the *Capital* office at Eighth and Kansas Avenue promptly at 1 o'clock tomorrow afternoon."

Over 400 newsboys attended.

Forepaugh-Sells arrived in Topeka on Sunday, the day before the exhibitions of June 15. Unloading of the four trains was accomplished at the Santa Fe crossing on Eighth Street. According to the *Daily Capital* over 1000 persons watched the unloading. The *Topeka State Journal* estimated the crowd at 1,500. The camera "fiend" was present, but where are the pictures a hundred years later?

"The first train to arrive was the horse train," the *Journal* reported. "It consisted of 11 big cars filled with the shows 300 head of ring and working stock. The unloading of the horses was a simple matter. The side doors of the cars were opened, a gang plank to the ground and the horses used to it from long practice walked out easily, in most cases at a simple word.

"The three trains that followed carried the wagons and vans. At the rear of the trains were three or four coaches that were used as sleeping cars by the performers and working men.



A sixteen horse hitch pulling the No. 1 bandwagon in 1896. Pfening Archives.

"The first train arrived at 10 o'clock and it was 1 o'clock before the last car was unloaded.

"On top of many of the vans were men asleep, tent hands undoubtedly, and many not overly clean but troubled with no conscience probably, for they slept soundly enough amid the shouts of the spectators and trainmen, the jarring and jerking of the engines, and beneath the scorching radiance of the sun.

"The vans and wagons were on flatcars their wheels blocked and the tongues removed and put beneath.

"The coaches that terminated the train were uncoupled and pulled away from the rest of the train.

"A big iron gangway was laid from the end of the last car to the ground. Men put the tongues in the wagon first--all the wagons 'ride' backwards--and a team of horses on the ground at the side of the cars were hitched to the wagon by a long rope.

"They pulled the car (sic) along until it reached the incline which it ran down itself guided by two men at the tongue. To prevent accidents it is held back and its speed regulated by a long rope that is attached to a big iron spool at the side of the last car.

"By the time the last wagon is unloaded it has a long roadway over the ten or twelve cars that is made continuous by aprons of heavy iron laid from car to car.

"Two train loads making 60 wagons were unloaded in this way and a train of 30 animal vans was unloaded also.

"Men with teams with from two to ten horses were ready to haul the wagons and vans and floats and band wagons and chariots to the fair grounds.

"The main interest was centered in the expected unloading of the elephants and in this the crowd was fooled.

"The thirteen elephants, eight camels and other animals of similar sort not in vans were unloaded at Fifteenth Street and very few saw them. The elephants were shipped in three big cars like box cars, five in a car. Then they walked out on gang planks as the horses did and proceeded in pairs to the fair grounds followed by a crowd of boys whom even a circus man couldn't hoodwink.

"While the cars were being pushed about the yards hundreds of boys, colored and white, jumped on and off the rapidly moving cars and it is a great wonder no one was killed or badly hurt."

The reporters of the *Journal* must have devoted their entire day of rest to covering the great Forepaugh-Sells circus, and on show day published what is probably the most extensive reportage of any Kansas circus day. The above report on unloading the train was followed by a story titled: "PUTTING UP THE TENTS."

"The circus trains had hardly stopped at Fifteenth Street yesterday morning than a large number of overhauled (sic) and dirty shirted men jumped off the train and began enquiring for the show lot.

"Each carried on his shoulder a bundle of long iron rods sharpened at one end, with rings and red tags at the other.

"They were the surveying gang or engineer's corps and it was their duty to locate the different tents and stake off the grounds with their iron stakes so that when the wagons and tent hands arrived from the trains they could go immediately to work.

"The first to go up were the stables and dining and cooking tents. There were eight

long stable tents with two rows of horses in each, the circus carries its own harness and blacksmith shops and those tents were put up also.

"The dressing and sideshow tents was easy.

"It is the putting up of the big tents, the animal and circus tents, that is worth seeing.

"At the menagerie tent gangs of men run to dig the holes for the six center poles, and gangs with sledge hammers go around to drive the tent stakes. These stakes are six feet long perhaps, with iron rings about their heads. It takes a very little time to drive one since from four to eight men constitute a gang.

"The men stand about the stake after it has been started, each with a heavy sledge hammer in his hands which he swings at arms' length. They strike in rotation so rapidly that the heavy hammer heads fall on the stake in a steady patter until it is deep enough.

"The center poles are then laid out and with the base at the hole intended for it. The guy ropes are arranged and the poles are lifted and straightened by the guys.

"The canvas itself is rolled from the wagons in big balls as big as snow balls (sic). Each is one section of the tent roof.

"When it was rolled the night before, it was doubled three times and rolled to a corner and tied into a ball. It is an easy matter then to unroll all the canvas until all the edges meeting form the 'top' as the roof is called.

"The sections are then laced together, men take the pulley ropes and up the top goes to the height of the poles in the center and flapping at the sides. It doesn't flap long, however, till the side poles are pushed up and tied and the tent is ready for the side wall.

"The side wall is the canvas that goes around the side of the tent. It is laid out on the ground in a string and raised by means of the ropes that afterward hold it in place.

Ephraim Sells, general director in 1896. Pfening Archives.

"A TALK WITH MR. SELLS.

"Mr. Ephraim Sells is the big man with the show. He is not big physically, but when he speaks his word is law. There is probably



no man in the show business who so thoroughly understands handling men as Mr. Sells. He is everywhere. When a piece of canvas is to be spread, he is on the ground and he is not long in detecting a laborer who shirks his duty. He gives out instructions about the animals and keeps his eye on the performers.

"Mr. Sells has general oversight over all the details, but unless something goes wrong, he does not spend much time with any particular thing. He knows the names of all the elephants and takes great pride in the animals, the performing hippopotami being his special favorites, because they are worth more than any of the other animals in the menagerie.

"Mr. Sells is quite democratic in his manners. He eats his meals in the performers' tent, and sees that no one goes hungry. Twenty-five years in the show business has given Mr. Sells a brusqueness, which seems to be a necessary adjunct of the managerial profession.

"This has not been a very good year for us," said the veteran showman to a *Journal* reporter, "but I do not complain because I know how hard money comes. Our tour in Kansas has not been as successful as it might have been, but I am not surprised. The surprising thing to me is that Kansas people are in as good shape as they are.

"Kansas is made up of people who came west to make homes. They are the best class of people on earth, but about the first thing they ran against was the mortgage sharks, and I believe Kansas is cursed with worse men of that class than any place. Some of your bankers belong to that class too. Well, the farmer has been working for the mortgage sharks ever since he came to Kansas. He raises a crop of corn, sells it, and the turns the proceeds over to the man who holds his mortgage. Then this state has not had a first class crop year for five years. All these things help to make the people hard up.

"We have made our show bigger and better than ever, but the people have not the money, and that is all there is to it. We have taken \$2,500 a day since we have been in Kansas, and that seems like a lot of money, but it takes \$2,500 a day to run this show, and you see we have not a great deal left.

"An ordinary man who visits this show or any big show has no idea about the magnitude of the affair and what it costs. That menagerie represents quite a fortune. I was offered \$4,500 for the rhinoceros before we left New York, and the elephants are worth from \$4,500 to \$5,000. The low price for the pair of hippopotami would

be \$50,000, so that you can see that there is a pile of money tied up there. Then the tents cost \$8,000."

"Mr. Sells and the reporter were standing near the horse tents while he was talking, and the conversation was interrupted by the sound of someone whipping a horse.

"Here, there!" shouted Mr. Sells in his loudest voice, "what is the matter there?"

"This horse is being whipped for kicking," shouted back the stable man.

"Is it Tom?" called back Mr. Sells.

"No, it is Mac," the man answered.

"This apparently satisfied the proprietor, but the beating of the horse was not resumed.

"Mr. Sells places the value of the show this year at \$250,000. 'But,' he said, 'there is no sale for this kind of a thing. There are probably four or five big shows in the country who could use our stuff, but outside of that, there is very little sale for any of it. I have to stay in the business because I can not let go, even if I wanted to. The man who has money does not want this business, and he would go broke in two weeks anyhow.

"You have no idea how particular we have to be. We keep an inventory of everything belonging to the show and we know it when a cot is missing or anything else, no matter how small.

"In the matter of tickets given to storekeepers for putting lithographs up in their windows we keep close tab. The first set of bill posters come around and make a contract with the storekeeper by which the merchant is to keep the lithographs in the window until the show comes.

"Sometimes it happens that the man tears down the lithograph after he has his ticket and the advance people leave. In a week or two, another set comes around and they inspect all the lithographs. Every window is numbered, and when a lithograph is missing a note is made of it and the merchant has a ticket with a number corresponding and it is placed on the no good list.

"This list is tabulated and a man sits near the ticket taker with the list. When a lithograph ticket is presented it is referred to the man with the list and he reports whether good or not. If he finds the man has torn down his lithographs the ticket is refused. Sometimes they raise a great fuss about it, but then we take out their contract and show it to them. Often they threaten to sue us, but they never do.

"It costs more to show in a big town than in a small place, because it costs much more to bill

a big place. Show bills cost from four and a half to seven cents a sheet, while the lithographs cost from five to nine. Then a great many more bill boards have to be put up in a large place and there are a great many more papers we have to use for advertising. It costs us \$1,000 more to show in Kansas City than in Topeka.

"I have been in the show business twenty-five years and I do not know when I will get out, perhaps never," said Mr. Sells meditatively, as the reporter left him.

"WITH THE HEAD ANIMAL MAN.

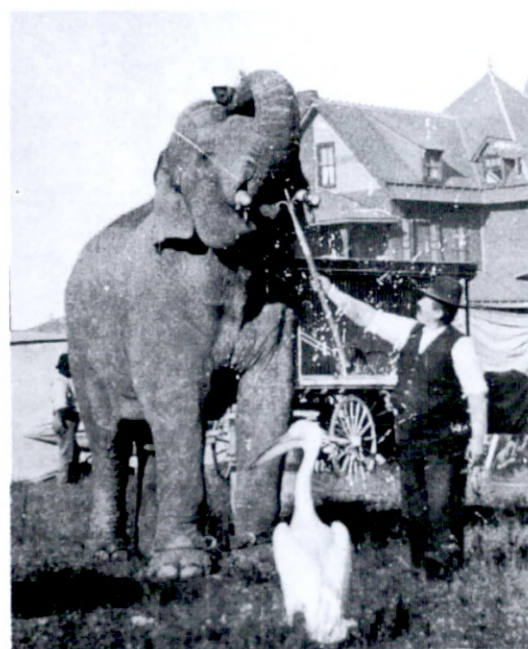
"William Chambers is the head animal man of the Sells-Forepaugh show. He has charge of all the animals and knows the names of all of them from the tiniest bird to the largest elephant.

"Mr. Chambers has a resolute face and his hands are seamed with deep scars. 'A lion gave me those,' said he in response to an inquiry. 'I put my hand on the bottom of a cage and he took hold of it. I have never had any very exciting experiences, though I have seen some poor fellows torn to pieces by tigers and lions.

"It has been a great many years since I started in this business," continued the animal man, "and of course I like it. I do nothing else and I have been with Sells' show for the past five years.

"When I started in the business I handled elephants only, but I have handled all the different kinds of animals on earth since then. I like the el-

William "Star Kid" Chambers menagerie superintendent in 1896. Pfening Archives.



hephants best because I got accustomed to them first.

"Here is a lion I raised myself," walking toward a cage containing three lion cubs, nearly full grown. "He is four years old. Hello, Nero, old boy," said the big man, affectionately patting the beast's head. Nero put one of his big paws through the bars and turned his head in intense satisfaction. Mr. Chambers took hold of the beast's foot and pushing by the hair revealed a set of dangerous looking claws. "This fellow has never been whipped. It would not go well with a man who went into the cage and tried to whip him. He would not stand it.

"I use different methods with different animals. I have to keep most of the animals afraid of me. Here is a mean one," said Superintendent Chambers walking up to another cage. "Here Prince," he shouted firmly. The big beast sprang to his feet his long teeth showing and sprang against the bars with terrific force. "Now watch him cower." Mr. Chambers picked up a long bar with two sharp prongs on one end. He shoved the bar through into the cage and the ferocious beast crouched in humble submission. "Now get up," called the superintendent and the lion reared on his hind legs and placed his paws on the side of the cage near the top.

"Mr. Chambers led the way from cage to cage and it was plain to be seen that he is complete master of the situation. He patted a cowardly hyena on the head and the animal crouched on the floor. 'They are the greatest cowards in the world,' said he, 'but they are also very treacherous. If one jumps on you the whole gang follows suit and a man would stand a poor show for his life.'

"Here are the Bengal tigers we got in Australia. They were as quiet as they could be for a time and one day down in Kentucky they attacked the head animal man who was riding with them and before they could be beaten off they had injured him so he died.

Since then they tore off a man's arm and only a day or two ago they dug a man in the back who was standing near their cage.

"These two black tigers once escaped from their cage down here in a railroad wreck and we recaptured both of them. We shot a limb out from under one and as he came to the ground he jumped on a man called Texas Jack. The man went down but he threw up his arm and it happened to go down the tiger's throat. It went down so far that the animal could not bite him and we secured him by pinning him down with stakes. The other one was captured the same day in a corn shock after he had been having a terrific fight with a bull dog."

"I suppose I will always handle animals. I spend all my time with them and would feel lost any place else."

"The animals, and there are a host of them, all present a sleek, well-fed appearance."

"WONDERFUL ELEPHANTS.

"Joseph Beatty, the little fellow with a firm chin and gray eyes has charge of the heard of elephants on the Sells Forepaugh show. Only a week ago, he narrowly escaped with his life in Kansas City. Dick, a big elephant, not considered vicious, attacked him and had it not been for the agility of the trainer would have finished him in short order.

"Dick is not a bad fellow," said Mr. Beatty in an apologetic tone. "But all male elephants have spells when they are dangerous. I got this about three months ago," and Mr. Beatty pushed back his hat and revealed a frightful scar on the side of his head. "Topsy threw me against a wall. I have not had much trouble. An elephant is easy to handle as long as he behaves himself. When he gets ugly he is mighty hard to manage.

"This is John L. Sullivan that used to box. He was also a clown elephant but we have dropped all that. He is the only

The Forepaugh-Sells Circus midway in 1896. Only one ticket wagon is shown. Pfening Archives.

talking elephant in the world and is one of the most intelligent I ever had anything to do with. The big one next to him is Vic and she is as jealous of him as she can be."

"Mr. Beatty went up to John and took hold of his trunk. Vic rattled her chains dangerously. 'John, are you happy?' questioned the trainer.

"The elephant gave a squeak which the trainer interpreted as meaning yes.

"Vic is very hard to manage," continued Mr. Beatty. "In going through the country if she sees a cow she will start out and catch it, She hugs it up and lets it go. She will do the same thing with a pig or a horse, If she sees anyone hurt a camel, it makes her almost crazy. She has a special fondness for camels and she would make short work of a man who was whipping a camel if she can get hold of him. She won't allow anything to be hurt if she can help it."

"We have only two of the African elephants. They are wild and difficult to teach and are altogether very unsatisfactory. An elephant is easy to train as long as they do not think you are making them work. As soon as they think that they get balky."

"I have handled elephants five years with this show and like the work, We work with them the year around."

"COOKING AND EATING.

"The cooking and eating departments with a show like the one that is here today are no small affair.

"There are two big kitchens and two big dining tents. They have only tops and no side walls, and all the cooking is done and the food is served almost on the prairie, one might say, and everything about it appears to be clean and wholesome.

"In one tent the performers, the candy men and the managers' departments eat. Here it is that the women eat. At one end of the tent is the table at which the proprietors and executive staff have their meals.

"They are waited on by eighteen colored waiters in white suits and aprons and caps. The tables after they are laid look like banquet tables. Good food is served. This tent has six cooks and several pan washers.

"The other dining room in which the working men eat is about the same proportions, though the tables do not look quite so nice.

"The food bill is enormous.

"When eggs are served it takes 216 dozens and the pans they are fried in over an open fire in dug trenches are about four feet long by two feet wide.



"The cooking is done on an immense scale.

"When steak is used it takes 250 pounds. Four bushels of potatoes are consumed at a single meal; 76 loaves of bread are used; 20 pounds of coffee, 80 pies, 260 pounds of roast, 2 bushels of beans, 4 gallons of milk and about 20 pounds of butter.

"At supper last evening fried chicken was served in the performers' dining room and it took 48."

"YOUNG ALLEN SELLS.

"Young Allen Sells, who is named after the well known Topeka Allen, is manager of the Sells-Forepaugh show. He is a son of Ephraim Sells and a very nice fellow. This last might be said of everyone connected with the Sells-Forepaugh show.

"Isn't it a pretty hard matter," a *Journal* reporter asked him, "to keep a big show like this clear of thieves and followers?"

"Not so hard as you might think," said Mr. Sells. "You see, we take care to have honest loyal men at the head of every department. They have two or three assistants each, and it is a pretty hard matter for anyone to do any pilfering or stealing under their eyes. If an employee does anything like that he is immediately turned over to the authorities."

"Of course we can't keep anyone out of the same town the show is in, but we can keep them away from the show grounds."

"A more effective way to keep crooks away, however, than to arrest them is to whip them. These fellows had rather lie in jail than be marked in any way. It doesn't take much of a mark to serve for identification in the future, you know."

"I chased one fellow, a pickpocket, off the grounds in a Michigan town last year and that very evening saw him again in the crowd at the ticket wagon. He had a loaded cane in his hand and I went out and snatched it out of his hand and hit him in the forehead with it. It not only nearly killed him, but marked him so that he will be put at a disadvantage in doing crooked work for the rest of his life."

"It was a lesson to others, too, and we were singularly free for some time after that."

"A man may come into a circus crowd and operate for two or three days without getting caught, but we soon learn his face, and off he goes."

"I remember one year we were at Hutchinson and a pickpocket undertook to go through a woman's pockets. She was a big woman and had nerve and what did she do? Did she faint? No. She grabbed the fellow by the

ADAM FOREPAUGH
THE NEW YORK PRESS REBARD IT
THE GREAT FOREPAUGH TRICKS
SELLS FOREPAUGH
PETER ILLS
LEWIS SELLS
SOUTH BEND, WEDNESDAY, MAY 27
THE WORLD HAS NEVER SEEN UNITED
THE PUBLIC FAIRLY OVERWHELMED AND NO WONDER

SOUTH BEND, WEDNESDAY, MAY 27

Herald used by the Forepaugh-Sells circus in 1896. Pfening Archives.

hand that was in her pocket and held it there, yelling at the top of her voice. He got five years, I think."

"CLEVEREST ONE OF ALL THE AGENTS.

"The press agent of the show is Mr. James B. DeWolfe, who is one of the youngest men in the business, and the *Journal* is willing to say the best. He looks after the comfort of representatives of the newspapers. 'Now please don't say, "Look out for pickpockets." We have officers of our own and do our best to keep away all suspicious characters. We are trying to make our show as clean as possible and

no thugs follow us if we can help it."

The *Capital* reported, "An unexpected feature of yesterday's performance was given in the side show when a Topeka woman, Mrs. L. B. Baker, entered the cage with three lions. Several hundred extra tickets were sold when this act was announced. The lady entered the cage in the dressing room and then an elephant was brought in to push the car around the long track. Many people shuddered during this performance, though the lions acted like so many kittens all the while."

Without revealing its source, the *Topeka Daily Democrat* claimed that the circus took in over \$3,000. The paper also related that 150 patients from the insane asylum attended the matinee. About 40 Indians came from the Potawatomie reservation north of Topeka. The temperature on circus day was in the mid-eighties.

The departure of the circus trains prompted another informative report in the *Journal*.

"The Sells-Forepaugh show carries (sic) 47 cars, eight of which are sleeping cars. During the recent tour through the southern states the train ran in two sections because the time is slower, but in the western states it has been found necessary to run four. The train is given the right of the main track over all other trains, passenger or freight, and is run at an average speed of 20 miles an hour. On good track 30 miles is sometimes made, this being the limit.

"Every show has a trainmaster. He is he man who has immediate supervision of the work of loading and unloading, and is responsible for getting the train out of one town without delay and into the next in sufficient time to have all preparations completed by the appointed hour for the first performance. He is the man who can be seen in all manner of weather, rain or shine, standing at the crossing where the loading or unloading is taking place, superintending the work, directing the men, and leaving his post only when the last wagon has left for the grounds or when the last section of the loaded train pulls out of the city. Mr. Fay, formerly with Ringling Brothers, is the trainmaster of the Sells-Forepaugh show.

"In addition to the trainmaster of the show, the trainmaster of the railroad division over which the show is traveling always accompanies the train. His object is to see that the best possible service is afforded the show."

"The traveling quarters of the show people, although not as luxurious as

Pullman cars, are fairly comfortable, probably more so than is generally supposed. Of the eight sleeping cars of the Sells-Forepaugh, four are for the use of the professionals and four for the use of the working hands.

"In the cars used by the professional people two rows of berths are built on each side of the car. The cars are divided, one half being assigned to the women and the other half to the men. The berths are built solidly, but the majority are supplied with a spring netting. The bedding is of a superior quality and clean.

"The two Sells brothers, Ephraim and Lewis, occupy state rooms in separate cars. The rooms are finished similar to the staterooms in Pullman cars, and are supplied with all modern conveniences.

"The sleeping cars of those rather unfortunate individuals, the circus hands, are built on the plan of a box car. Three rows of double berths run along each side of the cars, and each car accommodates 70 persons. Eight small windows, covered with wire netting, let in both light and air. The men say they are fairly comfortable."

Leavenworth saw the show on June 16. Advertising began in the Leavenworth *Standard* on May 30. On June 9 advertising car No. 3 was in town and 18 crew members registered at the National Hotel.

Forepaugh-Sells received the usual high praise bestowed on it by the Kansas press, but the *Standard* devoted more space to an argument over the amount of the city license: "Gentlemen of the council I have an explanation to make or a story to tell," said City License Collector Herren in the midst of the council proceedings last night.

"I was unable to collect the circus license the other day. I visited one of the agents for the Forepaugh-Sells Brothers shows Tuesday forenoon, for the purpose of collecting the license amounting to \$100. The show people informed me they were not exhibiting in the city and did not have to pay a license. After a parley the agent offered to pay me \$75, I refused to accept the \$75, informing the agent that I could not in my official capacity accept less than \$100. He would not pay \$100 and I took nothing."

"I am astonished at our license collector," began Mr. Schulte of the Third ward with some warmth. "Is it possible that our collector does not understand the performance of his duties, or is he negligent. Why did he not invoke the law and arrest the circus people for parading through the streets without paying a license therefore?"

"Mr. Herren explained there was no

Indisputably the World's BIGGEST SHOWS, Coming to Xenia, THURSDAY, APRIL 23



"It brings into alliance the three biggest show enterprise in the world."—N. Y. Recorder

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All The Rarest Living Features and Greatest Artists on Earth.

2 Biggest Herds of Elephants

AND THE BEST TRAINED ON EARTH
THE ONLY TRAINED SEA LIONS AND SEALS

Pair of Giant Hippopotami, Tremendous Two-Horned
Sumatra Rhinoceros, Monster Polar Bear, Flock
of Ostriches, African Eland, Ethiopian Gnu,
Niger Antelope. We Have Them All, No
One Else Has.

100 CHARIOT DENS, AQUARIUMS AND CARS

4 RINGS, 2 STAGES, MID-AIR TRIUMPHS.
300 CHAMPIONS, 100 ACTS.

All The Superbest Races of All Time
Eminent Amusement Contests of All Nations.

THE NEW WOMAN IN MOTEL
A REAL ROYAL JAPANESE CIRCUS.

BIG PERFORMING ANIMAL ARENA
CHILDREN'S TOSPY-TURVEY CIRCUS.

- DOUBLE STREET PARADES -

OF POTENTIAL SPLENDORS,

—AT—

10 O'CLOCK A. M., THURSDAY, APRIL 23.

This newspaper ad was used in Xenia, Ohio, the second stand of the 1896 season. John Polacsek collection.

ordinance prohibiting a show from making a street parade. He said further that if the councilman from the Third ward or anybody else would show him such an ordinance he would pay the balance of the circus license out of his pocket.

"The councilmen did not seem to be very well posted in this matter last night. Treasurer Fenn, after others had practically given up the collection of the license took \$50 from the show people as a compromise. He saw that if he did not do this the city would not get a cent. Members of the council were wont to censure Mr. Fenn in his absence last night whereas by his sagacity the city is just \$50 ahead.

"The circus did not have to pay the

city a cent for exhibiting on the reservation. It paid \$50 in order to avoid any possible trouble it might have been put to."

Moving from Leavenworth the show played St. Joseph, Missouri, on June 17, followed by dates in Missouri, Iowa, Illinois, Wisconsin, Minnesota and Nebraska before returning to Kansas for exhibitions at Belleville on July 18.

Forepaugh-Sells did not create much of a ripple in north-central Kansas. The Belleville *Republic County Freeman* disposed of the show in the following paragraph: "We did not see the circus in person on Saturday but we are told that it was fully up to the bills and even the most critical person could not find a single thing that the management advertises that they did not carry out. The crowd in the city was very large notwithstanding that some parts of the county were visited by a heavy rain the night before. It is estimated that from 2000 to 3000 attended the show."

Adam Forepaugh, Sr., had an excellent reputation in Kansas, but the Sells brothers were personally intertwined in the social and economic life of the state, principally in Topeka. The winter of 1876-77 found Sells Great European on the fair grounds in Topeka. The brothers' number two show, Anderson & Company, wintered in Topeka in 1878-79. Anderson & Company and Sells 7 Elephant show both spent the winter of 1879-80 in Topeka. To the Kansas press Sells-Forepaugh was a more appropriate name for the show of 1896.

When Allen Sells retired from the show he established himself in Topeka as a "Capitalist." Allen was active in politics and was a leader in the development of the city. Lewis and Peter invested thousands of dollars in Topeka real estate and at one time owned 25 parcels of land in a ten block stretch of Topeka's main business street, Kansas Avenue. Allen, Lewis and Peter all served as board members of Topeka banks. Lewis married a Topeka woman. Ephraim chose not to invest in Topeka, but he was a frequent visitor.

Despite the magnitude of the benefits the Sells brothers bestowed on Topeka, there is no remembrance of their ties to the city--no park, no square, no street bears the name "Sells." The only monument is the gravestone of Allen Sells in Topeka cemetery.

Research funded in part by grants from Wolfe's Camera & Video, Topeka, Kansas.

Mike Martin's CIRCUS HOBBY HALL

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Here are five mint editions from the final Johnny North seasons including: '62, '63, '64, '65 and '66. Super years with great performers - Harold Alzana, Zacchini's Cannon, The Bokaras, Klauser's Bears, The Bisbini Family, Hanneford Troupe, Charles Moroski, Galla Shawn and countless more!

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The '47 season is well remembered as the year Johnny North signed more than 40 first-time-in-America acts. The tour returned to mostly one day stands and the first fleet of show-owned air conditioned sleepers were added to the train.

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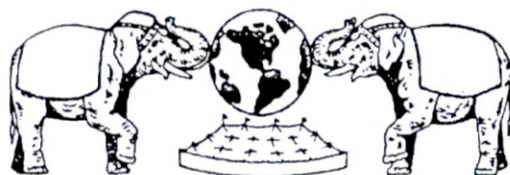
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